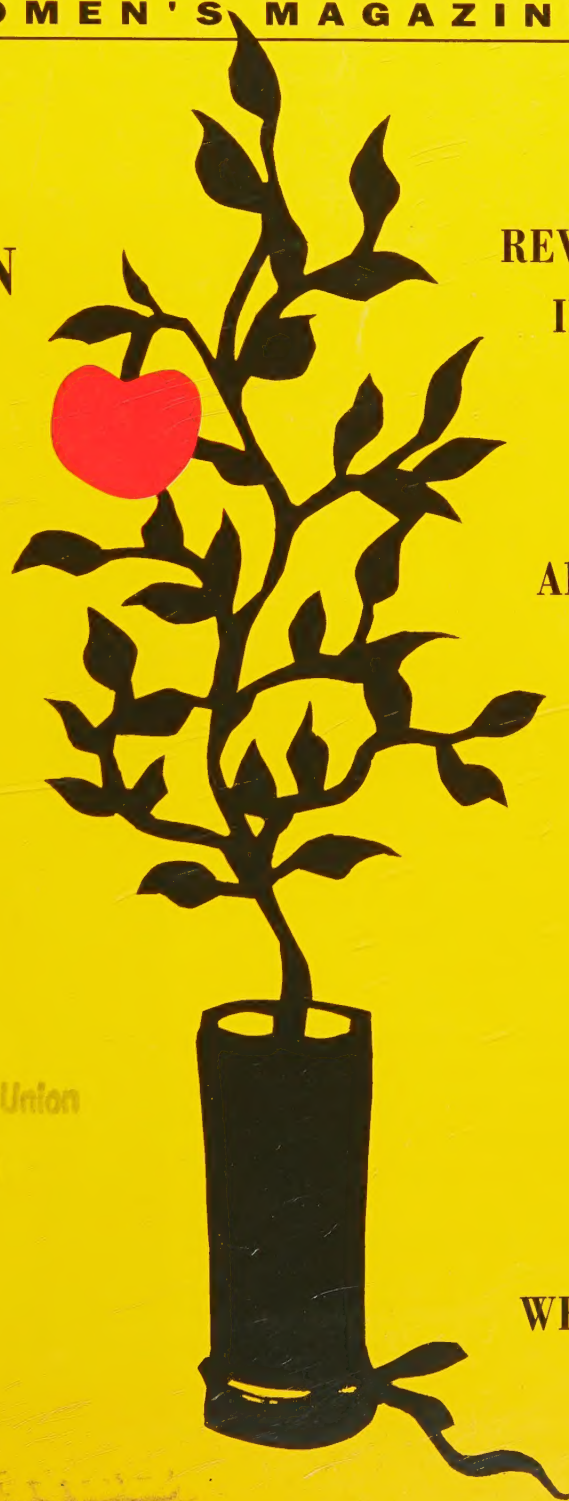


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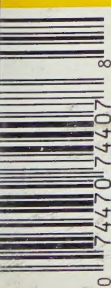


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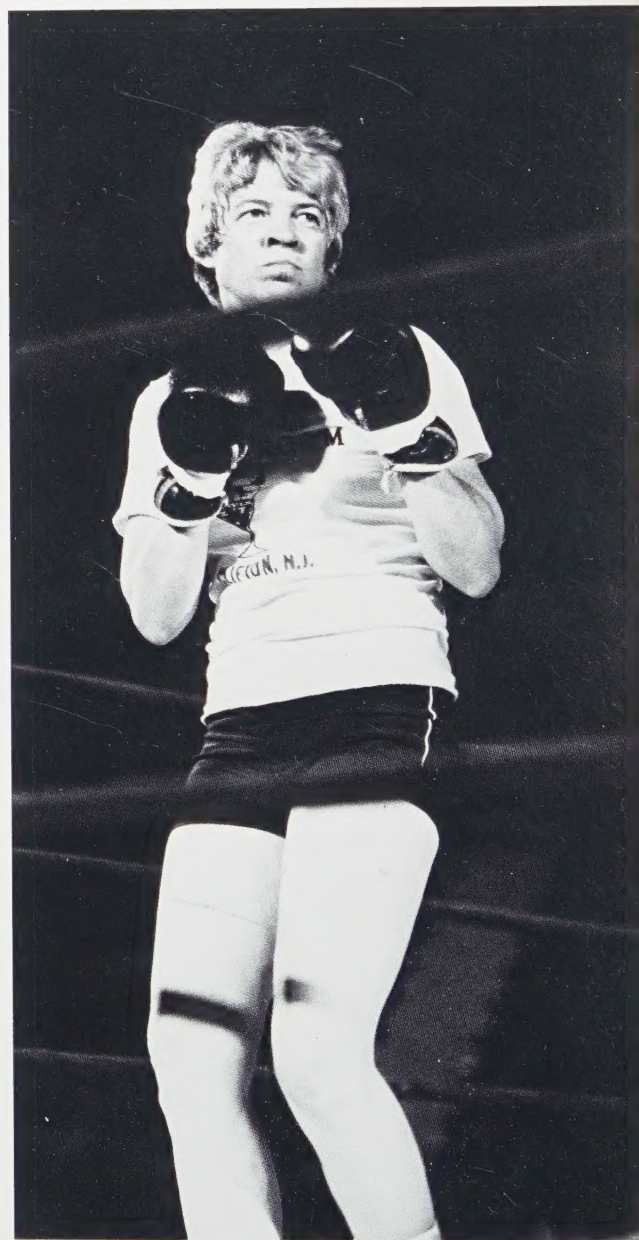
Living in Pakistan in the 1950's with her late husband (a United Nations official), Silbert found herself unable to get work as a woman writer in that country. She borrowed one of her husband's cameras, and shot a roll of film each day, learning techniques at her Pakistani photo lab.

She's best known now for her portraits of Jewish writers, a portfolio she developed out of her own vocation as a poet and short-story writer. "I was afraid I'd get bored at a poetry workshop several years ago, so I brought along my camera. I photographed all the writers present, most of whom happened to be Jewish, and then the work began to be much in demand by literary magazines."

Her exhibits have appeared in Philadelphia's Museum of American Jewish History, at the Spertus College of Judaica in Chicago and at Hebrew Union College in New York and Cincinnati.

Layle Silbert

Describing herself as a "writer who photographs," Layle Silbert's eye for a good story led her to both subjects featured here: a woman in the boxing ring and a single Jewish woman in Morocco who supports herself as a shopkeeper.



LILITH

SUMMER 1989 / 5749

VOL. 14, NO. 3

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THREE ADULT DAUGHTERS TALK:

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By Carol Tavris

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■ WILL AND TESTAMENT

By Mary Cahn Schwartz

Who gets the brooch? Who gets the blessing? A contemporary mother-daughter team talk obsessively about what the mother wants done with her objects and assets — it's their personal ritual, a way of staying close which has fascinating Biblical precursors in its lessons about power, control and love 26

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LILITH is named for the legendary predecessor of Eve who insisted on equality with Adam: "After the Holy One created the first human being, Adam, He created a woman, also from the earth, and called her 'Lilith.' Lilith said, 'We are equal because we both come from the earth.'" (from *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b)

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Gillian Malkin

For years we've spoken and listened to the anger, hurt and diasappointment with their mothers many women gave vent to in the early days of the women's movement. Now we seem to be

entering a real time of healing and appreciation, certainly judging from the articles we've been seeing at LILITH's copy meetings. Women are writing with what feels like a new maturity, from the perspectives of both mothers and daughters, as each group — and each individual — learns to respect the diverse choices made by others.

Many of the articles in this issue of LILITH reflect women's concern with relations between the generations. In the "Don't Blame Mother" department (and that's also the title of a very interesting new book by Paula J. Caplan), we have here three "valentines" to mothers, including one by Carol Tavris, the psychologist whose earlier writing explored the emotion of anger. Although Hannah Kliger and Mary Cahn Schwartz (in her third appearance in LILITH) start out on other subjects, they too end up talking about how their mothers have modeled behavior for them.

Intergenerational issues were on my mind recently in a more public way as well, notably at April's historic march for "Women's Rights and Women's Lives" in Washington, DC, where many of the half-million participants carried signs saying "I am here for my mother too." I loved having my sixteen-year-old daughter Rachel along (shown here with me as we're bundled up against the cold) and my son Benjamin and his male college friends.

There were numerous Jewish women's groups represented on the march, including some who in the mid-1970's had a hard time putting their membership clout behind national women's issues, out of fear of alienating many of their members. Not so now. Jewish women of every political persuasion marched under banners for Hadassah, ORT, National Council of Jewish Women and — spotted by LILITH Associate Editor Diana Bletter — a group of women rabbinical students under the rubric of the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary with their kippot and their ideals all in place.

Politics of a different sort comes through in the translations of Israeli fiction by women writing in Hebrew, women who have never been accessible to English-speaking audiences before. The news is that, for women in Israel, as elsewhere, the personal *is* the political, and they tell us just how this works in two delightful and moving stories.

With this issue we welcome to LILITH's masthead Myra Sklarew as Poetry Editor. Beginning this July, Myra will be considering poetry submissions to run in the next four issues of LILITH.

Other important news: the magazine — bringing you articles and news you'll get nowhere else — needs your support urgently. Please remember to give gift subscriptions *now* and a tax-deductible contribution when you receive our appeal in the mail.

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JOB-HUNTING IN ISRAEL

Thank you for all the marvelous information regarding Israeli feminists (Summer 1988) and the efforts of Israeli feminists toward peace with the Palestinians (Winter 1989).

In February I began looking for work within the Israeli feminist movement following graduation from University of Michigan in April. LILITH was my primary source for information and addresses. I wrote letters to most of the organizations listed in "57 Reasons to Get in Touch," and I will return to Israel this summer to begin work in Haifa.

Thanks again for your help.

Susan Knoppow
Ann Arbor MI

LOYALTY AMONG JEWS

What impressed me most about Lilly Rivlin's article (Winter 1989) was the contrast between Jewish feminists and Palestinian Arab ones who loyally back their own side. If those Arab women carry any burden of guilt for the brutality, terrorism and war casualties that accompany their people's struggle to grab the one-fifth part of historic Palestine that isn't yet in Arab hands, they certainly didn't reveal it to their visitor.

No, it had to be the Jewish Ms. Rivlin who was obsessed with making a film using the theme of the Sarah/Hagar conflict and its image of the banishment by the Jews of the innocent victim, the true first-born.

Zalman Gaibel
Chicago

CREATING NEW RITUALS

It seems to me that the problem in creating meaningful new rituals is their inherent lack of tradition.

My twelve-year-old daughter and I read your description of the ceremony of the menarche (Fall 1989) with great interest. Both of

us were amused rather than moved.

We had celebrated my daughter's recent menarche by using traditional elements in unconventional ways. My daughter recited the two *brachot* (blessings), *She-asani kirtzono* (Thanking God for creating me according to His will) and *Shehecheyanu* (Thanking God for enabling us to reach this time) and we invited her grandmother and aunt to join us in a *seudah* (festive meal).

As Jewish women struggle to make Judaism reflect women's needs, concerns and rites of passage, it seems important to look to our tradition as well as to go beyond it.

Renee Septimus
Jamaica Estates NY

REMEMBERING OUR RADICAL MOTHERS

I am one of those who remembers the days of uproar over Emma Goldman, the activities of Rose Schneiderman and the job of Frances Perkins. I also witnessed the NYC Suffrage parade up Fifth Avenue (but I think it was later than 1915). My father, to whom I spoke Yiddish only, was a stronger supporter than my mother (who was completely "liberated").

G. Gang
Bronx NY

REFUGEE CAMP REPORT

The West Bank refugee camp of Dheisheh, home to some 6,000 Palestinians, lies just south of Bethlehem on the Jerusalem-Hebron road. In 1988 I came to Dheisheh as a nurse under the auspices of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which runs the Palestinian refugee camps. My first visit was to the home of a woman whose husband had been killed a week earlier.

The army allowed residents to assemble there [and at our van]

while team members dispensed medications and filled prescriptions written earlier. Other groups of soldiers started making their rounds through the narrow pathways of the camp. A small boy dropped a tiny stone from his roof. A soldier bent down, picked it up, held it between two fingers. "Look!" he hollered. Suddenly his group had their guns aimed towards the roof. Silence. The moment passed. The guns lowered. How silly, I thought; a kid playing with the soldiers, daring them perhaps. Silly, but the child could have died.

I belong to a group of people who have survived an attempt to annihilate us from the face of the earth. We pride ourselves on our high moral and democratic principles. At the same time I recognize

that no matter how much humiliation, brutality and punishment are measured out upon the Palestinians, they, like my people, will survive. Their desire for a homeland and their power to resist will not allow them to be extinguished as a people.

I hope that other Jews will come to understand that our future depends on finding a just and equitable solution to this conflict.

Ellen Siegel
Washington DC

CORRECTION

Rose Lipson, who was mentioned in Janet Zandy's "Radical Jewish Women: Reclaiming Our Legacy" (Winter 1989), writes that while she considers herself a "progressive woman," she is not a member of the Communist Party.



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Traditionally, the voice of the Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. No more. These pages are for news about Jewish women, usually in their own strong voices.



WOMEN FIGHT TO PRAY

The conflict between Israel's Ministry of Religion and the women praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem took a dramatic turn recently when Israel's Supreme Court agreed to make a decision on the legality of the women's service and to guarantee the women worshippers protection, as long as they refrain from praying at the Wall with *tallis* and Torah.

Although the court will not take up the question until December, the "Women of the Wall" expressed relief that the decision will be made by the secular body rather than the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which they say reflects right-wing Orthodox opinion.

Since December, 1988, when the first group of women gathered at the Wall for an Orthodox prayer service as part of the international "Empowerment of Jewish Women" conference in Jerusalem, they have been met with insults and violence by right-wing Orthodox men and women.

Men have hurled chairs over

the divider into the women's section, and women have kicked, bitten and scratched members of the prayer group on several occasions. Charges of harassment and law suits have been filed against both the "Women of the Wall" and the ultra-Orthodox, as well as against the police, who have been accused of failing to protect the women.

The Supreme Court ruling cleared the path for the women to pray at the Wall under the protection of the religious authority that governs the Wall, and permitted them to conclude their service with a Torah reading at a synagogue located in the nearby Jewish Quarter of the Old City. It also encouraged both the Ministry of Religion and the "Women of the Wall" to sit down and "work out their differences" as soon as possible.

So far the group has met with Zevulun Hammer, Minister of Religious Affairs, but both parties

have refused to comment on that meeting. "We went in an effort to fulfill the mandate of the court to reach an understanding," said Bonna Haberman, one of the organizers of the group. She says that the group will meet in the future with as many of the involved parties as possible.

The "Women of the Wall" is a group of Jewish women living in Israel who are attempting to convene monthly women-led morning prayer services at the Wall, which include reading from the Torah. Most members hail from North America and have brought their concepts of religious pluralism with them, much to the chagrin of Israeli religious authorities. The group represents all streams of Judaism, but members have chosen to hold Orthodox services so as not to exclude observant women from their ranks.

"Maybe this is the special gift North American women are giv-

ing Israel," says Anat Hoffman, a Jerusalem city councillor and one of the few native Israelis in the group. "This is a marvelous group with an open circle of leadership. You'll never see a group of religious men from all branches working together like this."

According to the "Women of the Wall," opposition to them is not based on *halacha* (Jewish law). No religious authority has dared declare that *halacha* forbids women from doing what they're doing. Opposition is based instead on *minhag* (custom). Simply, the women have been told that praying at the Wall with a Torah and wearing prayer shawls has never been done in Israel and therefore is not acceptable.

"This is part of a larger picture of Jewish women who have been learning and praying together in private places for at least fifteen years," explained Haberman. "We decided it's time to go public"

Continued on page 29



Two women clash over women's prayer service at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

THE RIGHT TO DIE

In a controversial court case that has reverberated in both Jewish and secular communities, an Orthodox Chicago woman opposed her husband regarding the continued treatment of their critically ill son — and won.

Miriam Soloveichik, a lawyer married to Rabbi Moshe Soloveichik, son of Rabbi Aron Soloveichik of the famous rabbinic family, went to court to prevent further surgery on her 12-year-old son, Yisroel Yosef, who had been battling terminal cancer for almost two years and was semi-comatose. While doctors at St. Lukes Hospital unanimously agreed that further surgery was "contraindicated," Rabbi Soloveichik felt that even if his son was in excruciating pain, *halacha* (Jewish law) insists that every moment in life is precious and everything must be done to keep him alive.

Ms. Soloveichik disagreed. "I could see my son was filled with excruciating pain," she explained. "He had lost his ability to talk and could communicate only through blinking his eyes. He would blink out, 'I want to die' and 'death.' He asked me often if his sickness was a punishment from God. Of course, I'd tell him no. Then he'd ask if he would go to *Gan Eden* (paradise) and if there would be pizza there. Later, he was unable to communicate, and all his doctors and I could see was sheer terror in his eyes. One does not have to wait for a child to have sheer terror to have *rachmones* (pity), to say enough is enough."

She asked *shylas* (religious opinions) of her father and brother, New York rabbis Chaim and Moshe Faskowitz, as well as a rabbi in Israel. All concurred that there was no *halachic* requirement to perform further surgery.

After a five-day trial, the presiding Chicago judge ruled in Ms. Soloveichik's favor. Yisroel Yosef died a few days later.

Since the court opinion, Ms. Soloveichik and her family have been harassed; she has been called "a transgressor." She explains, "My sin was not that I didn't accept *halachic* opinion — which I've always done. Instead, it was the fact that I dared, as a woman, to contest my husband's spiritual leadership. No woman is supposed to do that in public." The case has probably dissolved the Soloveichiks' marriage.

Since her son's trial, Ms. Soloveichik has received phone calls from other parents seeking advice and has counselled a father who forced hospital staffers to allow his brain-dead son to die naturally. In the wake of her own case, Illinois courts have ruled that a parent does not have to go to court to persuade a hospital to let a patient die. "I don't feel vindicated because of this new ruling," Soloveichik says. "I felt vindicated the moment my son died in peace."

— Diana Bletter

The Israeli Woman



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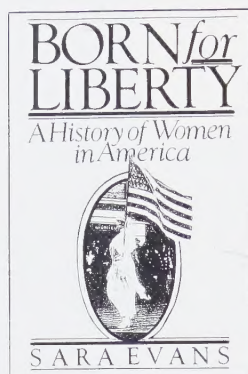
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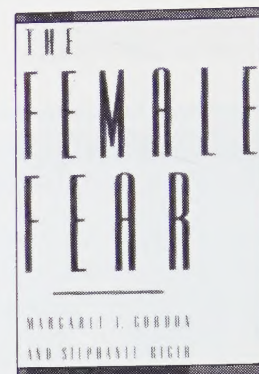
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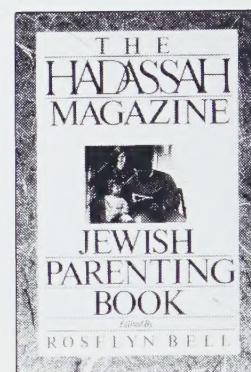


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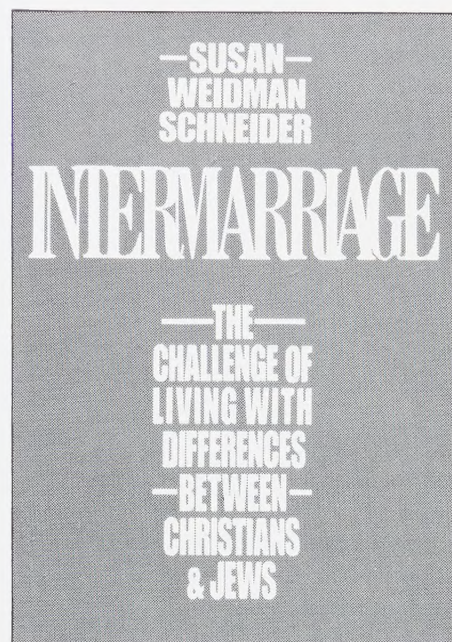
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Susan Weidman Schneider

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"This is a book for Christians as well as for Jews—for people seeking to bond not in spite of their differences, but through them. It names the challenges honestly, and then helps couples push through them toward a deeper partnership. Many interfaith couples are all too used to words of challenge; but these words of empowerment will be welcome indeed."

—Reverend Richard Spalding, Church of the Covenant, Boston, MA

"Schneider's book is particularly valuable on the feelings and actions of parents of intermarried couples, and on the day-to-day problems involved in raising children and running a household. It would be especially helpful to couples contemplating intermarriage, to those who are already intermarried, and to those who counsel them."

—Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, Temple Israel, Great Neck, NY

"Schneider explores the difficult issues of intermarriage with a sensitivity and compassion that I have often missed in other studies of this subject. This timely and important book should be required reading for anyone contemplating or living in an interfaith marriage."

—Dr. Lillian B. Rubin, author of *Intimate Strangers* and *Just Friends*

"Schneider's deft interweaving of the research literature with astute observations drawn from her own interviews should make this book high-priority reading for couples who are on the threshold of intermarriage."

—Egon Mayer, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College

"Ethnic and religious differences within an intermarriage can contribute to a new effectiveness and growth in a couple's relationship, or it can lead to the downfall of the marriage. Schneider brings new insight and guidance to a very complicated issue, and does it with clarity, sensitivity, and warmth."

—Joseph Giordano, Director of the Center on Ethnicity, Behavior, and Communications, American Jewish Committee

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GOD'S EAR

by Rhoda Lerman

New York: Henry Holt, 1989

309 pp., \$19.95

In the unlikely setting of a Chassidic commune in the wilds of Kansas, Yussel Fetner, heir to a fictitious dynasty of prophetic wonder-rebbes, stars in a comic romp of a novel with some odd twists along the way.

Yussel, struggling against his birthright, just wants to be an observant Jewish insurance salesman — but his “territory” knows he’s inherited the Fetner gift of prophecy. His clients want the inside tracks on, for instance, hemlines for the fall (almost all are in the *shmatte* — garment — business). Pressed, Yussel tells them to examine the Bible portion of the week. They’re ecstatic. The word “calf” leaps out at them, a sure sign from the heavens that “midis” are returning.

Getting past the book’s inaccuracies in references to Jewish observance and in transliterations from the Hebrew and Yiddish, the patient reader receives from Lerman (author of *Call Me Ishtar* and *The Book of the Night* among other novels) a novel that at times can be laugh-out-loud funny, with a kernel of both pathos and progress. And while the novel’s detailed and self-conscious absurdities do grow a little tiresome, both hero and reader get some interesting lessons about women and men along the way.

The ghost of Yussel’s late father appears frequently, Banquo-like, to offer counsel, telling his son to “pay attention to the details” — a piece of advice most men (women, too) probably need. After Yussel gives in to his father’s imprecations and manipulations and goes out to Kansas to minister to the broken people who were his father’s followers, the details matter more. His late father’s ex-hippie second wife meets tragedy partly because Yussel isn’t keeping track of all the action, as a good rebbe must. And Yussel’s own wife he ignores, avoids, or sees only as a dedicated consumer of goods and services, even as



Marilyn Cross

Rhoda Lerman

she’s enjoining him to behave more humanely.

Yussel does take instruction from some of the women around him — the lost-and-found souls in his commune, and especially from “Lillywhite,” his haunting, gorgeous, tough, larger-than-life neighbor and nemesis. We’re rooting for her as she forces him — and the dead — to hear a woman’s *kaddish* (prayer for the dead) in the book’s moving — and at the same time absurd — conclusion.

It’s the conclusion — and the presence of Lillywhite — that save this novel from being only an absurdist (though basically sympathetic) portrait of derailed Chassidism. Although Lillywhite is revealed to us almost exclusively as she appears in Yussel’s active fantasy life — as archetype and stereotype of the powerful redhead — and in no way seems the product of a feminist imagination, the book’s finale wraps up the comedy in a message about women’s role in liberating and transforming a traditionally religious male Jew. Listening to Yussel explain life with yet another tidy Chassidic epigram, Lillywhite concludes, “I think it’s time to make up some new stories.”

— SWS

THE RABBI'S GIRLS

by Johanna Hurwitz, illustrated by

Pamela Johnson

New York: Puffin Books, 1989

158 pp., \$3.95

ages 8-12

Fans of the *All of a Kind Family* series by Sydney Taylor and the *Ike and Mama* books by Carol Snyder will welcome the reissue of this fine example of a special genre of Jewish children’s books that blends the particulars of Jewish life in America earlier in this century with universal themes about growing up.

Modelled after Johanna Hurwitz’s mother, the appealing young female protagonist of *The Rabbi’s Girls* is strong, thoughtful, and naturally and undogmatically defiant. This bittersweet novel is told in the lively voice of Carrie Levin, the third in a family of six sisters. The story takes place in 1923-24, in Lorain, Ohio, where the Levins have moved so that their father can serve as rabbi to a small Jewish congregation.

As “the rabbi’s girls,” the Levin children experience feelings of privilege and pride as well as the burden of having to be an example to others. Growing up with a value-laden code of behavior is a source of strength and sometimes struggle. Carrie’s perspective on the events of her own life is deepened by her vicarious experiences of the joys and sorrows of the community that her father serves.

MINNIE'S YOM KIPPUR BIRTHDAY

by Marilyn Singer, illustrated by

Ruth Rosner

New York: Harper & Row, 1989

32pp., \$12.95

ages 4-8

Minnie’s parents tell her that her fifth birthday will be different — and wonderful in its own way — because this year it happens to fall on Yom Kippur.

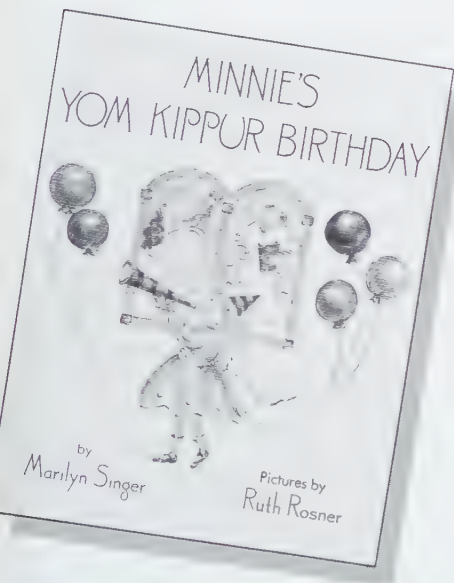
As told by Minnie, with all the curiosity, freshness, and anticipation that a five-year-old brings to the celebration of a birthday surprise, this story of her first

visit to a temple also captures the symbols and the meanings of the rich heritage of "the day we set aside to become a better person."

The straightforward text by Marilyn Singer has a satisfying balance of tension, frustration, humor and resolution. The words are complemented by Ruth Rosner's light and finely-detailed water color and pen illustrations to give an immediacy to the story, as well as depth to the Yom Kippur traditions as Minnie perceives and makes sense of them. Minnie's experience also includes comfortable non-sexist role models of mother, father, cantor and rabbi.

Though one wonders why Minnie had to wait till age five to be introduced to a Jewish house of prayer, we can be glad that she finally did, and that we can go along with her.

— Naomi Danis



WORTH NOTING

A Mensch Among Men: Explorations in Jewish Masculinity. Edited by Harry Brod with a foreword by Letty Cottin Pogrebin. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1988. \$10.95.

Before Golda: Manya Shochat. By Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi with an introduction by Marie Syrkin. New York: Biblio Press, 1988. \$12.95.

Chattel or Person: The Status of Women in the Mishnah. By Judith Romney Wegner. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. \$24.95.

Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace. By Sara Ruddick. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989. \$24.95.

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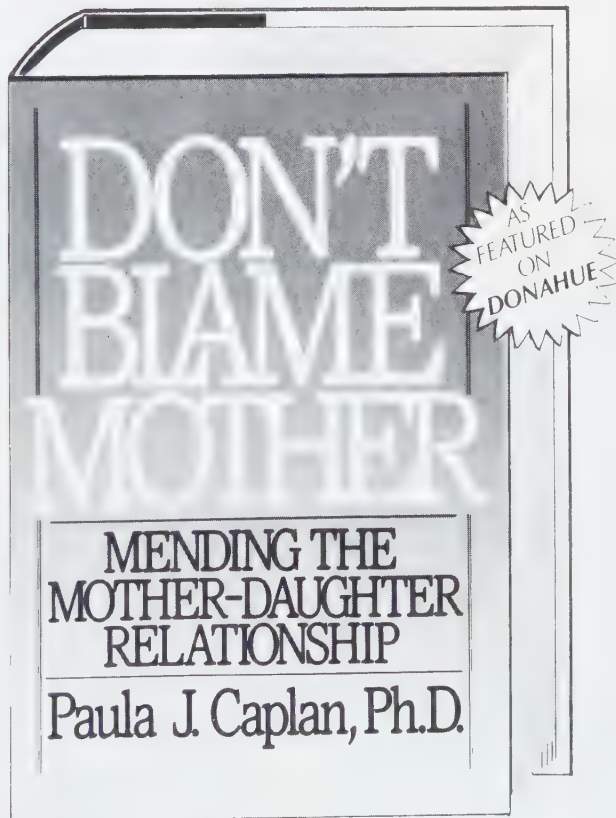
—Harriet Goldhor Lerner, Ph.D.,
author of *The Dance of Intimacy*

"Wise and wonderfully sensible, sane and easy to read, this book literally has the power to change your relationship with your mother or your daughter. . . . Caplan is not content with merely 'naming' the problem; she insists on healing it."

—Phyllis Chesler,
author of *Mothers on Trial*

"At long last! This is the book that redeems the mothers we have betrayed and the mothers we are."

—Susan Weidman Schneider,
author of *Jewish and Female*



Harper & Row

My Mother the FEMINIST

.....



BY CAROL TAVRIS

.....

There are some members of my family who are still waiting patiently for signs of my rebellion against my mother, Dorothy. I explain that I have tried to rebel, but it doesn't do any good. You only want to rebel against someone (a) as a way of protesting their values or character, which you dislike, or (b) as a way of determining your own values. I couldn't rebel against my mother for reason A, because I love and admire her values and character. She was an independent thinker, career woman, and feminist long before these were fashionable activities for women. Moreover, my mother's character is based on empathy, logic, and humor, so

rebellion would require one to be selfish, irrational, and solemn, none of which is much fun.

I didn't even need to rebel in order to determine my own values. My mother has always been willing to accept my choices and decisions, as long as I could explain them (and even when I couldn't). It is no fun rebelling for the sake of rebellion if your mother understands what you are doing. By "understands" I do not mean that fake, saccharine tolerance that masks disapproval, but the realization that children need to make their own mistakes and eventually lead their own lives, and you might as well let them do it with a minimum of whining. My mother was not entirely "happy," for instance that I did not

marry until my mid-30s, and she is still not happy that I will not, for reasons of fate, have children. But she understands the reasons for my choices and the circumstances that have shaped my life and made it different from hers, without a single guilt-inducing remark or snide hint. Sometimes she worries that she will be drummed out of the Jewish Mother Corps. "I can't even make chicken soup," she laments.

I recognized my mother's subversive feminist lessons only in retrospect, when, as an adult, I learned that biographies of Elizabeth Blackwell and Harriet Tubman were not standard children's fare. Other girls read *Anne of Green Gables* and Nancy Drew mysteries and I did too, but

my mother also gave me stories about Pocahontas, Phyllis Wheatley, Susan B. Anthony, and any other woman she found interesting. It also wasn't until adulthood that I realized how cleverly my mother had solved the "what shall a Jewish family do about Christmas?" dilemma. On Christmas morning I would always find a little something from "Mrs. Santa Claus," who, my mother explained, was undoubtedly doing all of Santa's work, including the gift wrapping, without getting credit. She would remedy this injustice.

My mother's feminism seems to have been influenced in part by her father, who was a nonreligious freethinker, and her mother, who was religious but never dogmatic. But mostly it seems to have come from an independent streak that made her determined to have her own way, even if there weren't many other women traveling in her direction. Nowadays we hear so much about the importance of role models and mentors, but my mother always did what she wanted without benefit of either — flying in biplanes, driving across the country on her own, and becoming a lawyer (which she did, in Chicago in 1927, at the age of 21).

My mother may have been deficient in one key requirement of the revolutionary: anger and a corresponding inclination to regard the enemy as uniformly malignant. Instead, my mother regarded the enemy as fodder for persuasion and conversion, which meant that she was prepared to argue from a stance of empathy rather than hostility. Naturally she has encountered ample amounts of sexism and anti-Semitism, but she has handled them as if they were bedbugs in the cot of life: unpleasant but natural forces that were to be eradicated, as best one could, with persistence and pluck.

For example, she once told me about the time she interviewed for a job as clerk in a law office (a job she needed to support her night school law courses). At the end of the interview, the employer suddenly looked at her and said, "By the way, you aren't Jewish, are you?" "Why yes, I am" said my mother, "but surely that doesn't matter." The interviewer sheepishly admitted that office policy was not to hire Jews. My mother neither accepted this statement passively nor protested it angrily. "Why not?" she said. "Well, um, because Jews are so loud and boisterous," he said.

At that moment the brassy voice of the

Mrs. Santa Claus, my
mother explained, was
undoubtedly doing all of
Santa's work, including the
gift wrapping, without
getting credit.

.....

Irish office manager suddenly rose above the office clatter — cursing a customer. "Oh, I see your problem," said my mother. "You obviously hired one Jewish woman already, and are regretting it." The interviewer laughed. My mother got the job. Eventually she overcame his other major prejudice too, against women lawyers.

From time to time, when I speak of my mother, people ask me three questions:

Doesn't she have any warts? Wasn't there a downside of having a feminist mom? Did you yearn for anything else? Thanks to my mother, I can emphatically understand the reasons for these questions, for our society is so used to blaming mothers for all our ills, and is so skeptical of people who sing only their mothers' praises. So I will answer these questions: Yes, but none as matters. No. No.

All her life my mother has been teaching me wise lessons in word and deed, and now she is showing me how to grow old. For her 80th birthday, my husband and I found two photos of her: one on a horse in the Rockies in 1929, at age 23, and one on a camel in Egypt, taken 50 years later. Now we have a new picture, because my brother's birthday present to her was a ride in a hot-air balloon. "Aren't you nervous about going up in one of those things?" asked a friend the night before the adventure. "I'm not sure," said my mother, "but I have a reputation to uphold."

Carol Tavris is the author of *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion* and the co-author of *The Longest War: Sex Differences in Perspective*. She has published extensively in the field of women's studies. She is a social psychologist and writer living in Los Angeles.

The key to better relationships

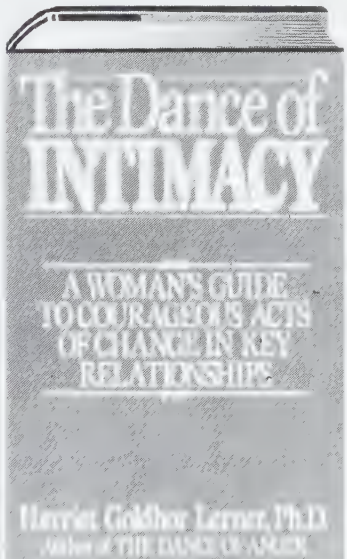
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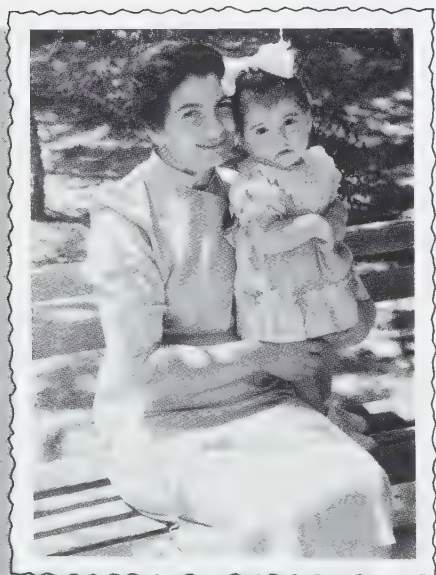
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FORTY YEARS
AFTER THE
HOLOCAUST

A SURVIVOR'S DAUGHTER LEARNS TO PRAY



BY HANNAH
KLIGER

Not long ago, my synagogue in Northampton, Massachusetts, asked me, an ordinary *shul*-goer, to give a talk about prayer. I didn't believe that I had any special expertise about the topic, but said yes to the request, and then found myself — in preparing my remarks — looking for a letter of my mother's that had been published in 1946 in the Yiddish newspaper *Der Tog*.

At the time of the letter, my mother, Franka Lorberbaum-Kliger, was 25-years old and in a detention camp in Cyprus, on her way to Palestine after having survived the war. I was not yet born; my older brother was about to be.

My feelings of weariness fade with each passing day, as I come closer to my goal — a quiet corner of my own in Israel. Until now, I have had no interest in sharing my experiences with anyone, but today I feel a first ray of light . . . It is only by chance that I survive, and I must confess that it is no great joy to remain living after such a disaster . . . In Auschwitz, I ceased to exist as a human being, and was transformed instead to a number. On my left arm, in black ink, I was branded with the number 48427 and a small triangle, the Nazi mark for Jewish criminal. There, in Auschwitz, our names vanished. And our spiritual suffering was often far greater than our physical afflictions. There, I lost my sister and her child, powerless even in the choice to die together with loved ones. When I wanted to accompany my sister into the ovens, a Nazi sadist objected: "You are still young. You must work yet, and only then will we allow you to die." I was pushed out of the line reserved for death.

In Auschwitz, I would sometimes meet several friends from our Warsaw Jewish student organizations . . . Very few of us survived. For us, the dearest moments . . . in Auschwitz were those times when, though hungry and exhausted, we would recall the idealistic underpinnings of our youth movement in Warsaw. We would dream about surviving the war, reunited with our friends who would perhaps have managed to escape to America, Israel or the Soviet Union. This was pure fantasy, of course. Enveloped by hunger, we could only dream . . .

After the liberation a new chapter of suffering began. It was not easy for me to

decide to return to Poland, where the very earth is soaked with the blood of dear ones and family ... but with the faint hope of perhaps finding someone, I returned to Warsaw.

After three weeks of wandering through war-torn Poland, I arrived at the ruins of Warsaw. The city and its streets, once so dear to me, seemed foreign and empty of any meaning. I found no one and I left for Lodz ... determined to leave Poland altogether.

In Bergen-Belsen, in the DP camp, I began to regain my strength. The new surroundings, the improved conditions, and the devotion of a group of colleagues from the movement — all of this raised my spirits ...

I resumed my organizational activity, and began thinking about immigrating to Israel. I was married on December 18, 1945 in Bergen Belsen to Rakhmiel Kliger, and from that moment on, the loneliness which had so pained my heart came to an end. We decided to build our life in Israel, and our group began its journey on April 4, 1946. Our group wandered for seven months until detained in Cyprus. Now I am here with my husband, behind English barbed wire, soon to become a mother. I am very concerned about this, for as yet I have no place that is my own, let alone a home for a small innocent baby. On December 22, we are due to leave Cyprus for Israel. It will not take too much longer before we will be a free people in our own land, and the wounds of our soul will heal.

I look forward to the birth of a new human being, part of a new generation, born at the threshold of our national homeland, our national future.

Reading this letter, 43 years after it was written, it occurs to me that the reason I was drawn to it is that I suspected it had something to teach me about prayer, about the capacity to pray, no matter where life sets us down — 1939 or 1989, Bergen Belsen, New York, or even Northampton.

I recall, for example, sitting with my mother as a child in *shul*, at the Williamsbridge Jewish Center in the Bronx, in the women's section. The *ba'al t'filah* (prayer leader) moved along quickly in the service, but my mother prayed at her own pace, pointing out certain savory words and phrases to me in the prayerbook we shared.

I now realize that my mother was one of the very few women in that room who understood Hebrew. And the very language, which she had learned as an adult, of course, was full of bloom and power for her. I remember our old neighbor Mrs. Pessy, who could not read at all, probably in any language, asking my mother, year after year, to tell her when the time for *Sh'ma Koleynu* (Hear our Voices) was approaching. For then

Mrs. Pessy would know when to begin to cry.

I sit now, thinking about prayer, wondering what my mother's letter, my parents' lives, my childhood experiences of sitting next to my mother in *shul*, all teach me about prayer, about the power of belief, connectedness, perseverance, love. And why, of all memories, can I bring up, so easily, the scene of Mrs. Pessy asking my mother to tell her when to begin to cry?

WITH THE FAINT HOPE OF PERHAPS FINDING SOMEONE, I RETURNED TO WARSAW



The author's
parents, 1946

It occurs to me that in my attempts to embrace more of the rituals and customs of Judaism as I grow older, what I am searching for is a bond with family members and loved ones whom I never knew because they perished in the *Khurban*, the Holocaust. I try to reach back, past that time of worlds turned upside down, of broken promises and shattered dreams, back to a place within myself, a place where even *I* can hope, believe, have ideals, love — despite this insistent heritage that spins countermelodies of despair inside my head.

I always have wondered whether *I* could have carried on, believed, hoped — indeed, whether I could have *prayed*? And suddenly it is clear to me:

It is not answers that we break through to, but the ability to *feel*, and thus to begin to pray. And so I know now why I remember old Mrs. Pessy with such a feeling of poignance and of clarity and warmth.

Because it is not Mrs. Pessy, but *myself*, who is asking my mother — and through her, my grandmothers, aunts, cousins, and sisters, all sacrificed — to tell me when the time for *Sh'ma Koleynu* is approaching, because I am finally ready to cry.

Hannah Kliger is an assistant professor in the department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies and the Department of Communication at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Fine-tuning: NEW WOMEN'S FICTION from ISRAEL

The two Israeli authors introduced to English-speaking readers in the next few pages represent a whole new cadre of writers: the first generation of Israeli women to write fiction in Hebrew. Their literary foremothers in Israel wrote poetry, not stories, novels or plays. The authors we bring you here write, as their predecessors did, about women's struggles for connectedness — in contrast to the men writing fiction in Hebrew, who often seem to be struggling to keep people out of each other's way!

Although Israeli writer Ruth Almog recently contended that Israeli women will remain "marginal" writers because they are typically excluded from the "national" experience — war — a growing number of women writing in Israel would argue with this thesis. Writers such as Shulamit Hareven (whose novel, *The Miracle Hater*, was named one of the best paperbacks of 1988 by *Publishers Weekly* and *The New York Times*), Yehudit Hendel, Amalia Kahana-Carmon, Shulamit Lapid and Savyon Liebrecht explore how truly the shadings of interpersonal relationships, conflicts of religious observance and issues of individual identity and destiny express the social core.

These women writers are, in a way, venturing into unexplored territory. Their issues include a mother and daughter pulling apart and then reconciling, the concerns of a young Jewish woman for the feelings of an Arab builder working for her, two Holocaust survivors trying to end their marriage. As critic Esther Fuchs has pointed out [*LILITH*, Summer 1988], when Israeli men have portrayed women in fiction, the women are seen in the background. When they do get our attention, they are often unbalanced, if not dangerous (as in Amos Oz's *My Michael* or A.B. Yehoshua's *Early in the Summer of 1970*). Now that women authors are recreating their lives — and their selves — in Israeli fiction, females are portrayed for the first time as purposeful human beings living independent, even heroic, lives.

With these stories, *LILITH* launches a project to bring to our readers English translations of works by Jewish women writers from around the world, highlighting the issues they focus on in each culture. The Israeli stories which follow, in the words of the jury that awarded Israel's 1987 Natan Alterman Literary Prize to Savyon Liebrecht, describe "the personal and local on its way to the universal."

APPLES from the DESERT

A story by Savyon Liebrecht



All the way from the Orthodox quarter of Sha'arei Hessed in Jerusalem to the great stretch of sand where the driver called out "Neve Midbar" and looked for her in his rear-view mirror, Victoria Abraham — her heart pounding and her fists clenched — had only one thing on her mind. She took some bread in brown paper and an apple with a rotten core out of her string bag and joined the blessing

on the fruit to the prayer for travel, as prescribed. Her eyes were fixed on the yellowing landscape spread out in front of her — and her heart was fixed on her rebellious daughter Rivka who left the Orthodox neighborhood six months ago and went to live on a kibbutz of secular Jews. Now, Victoria had found out from her sister Sara that Rivka was sharing a room with a boy, sleeping in his bed and living as his wife.

All through the eight-hour trip, she pondered how she would act when she was face to face with her daughter: maybe she would cajole her as if she weren't angry with her, teach her about a girl's honor in a man's eyes, explain sensitive issues, one woman to another. Or maybe she would start out with cries of despair, shout out the grief, the disgrace that Rivka had brought down on their noble family, shriek like a funeral mourner until the neighbors heard. Or maybe she would perform her mission stealthily, draw her daughter away from there with false news and then put her in

her room under lock and key and obliterate all trace of her. Or maybe she would terrify her, tell her about Flora, Yosef Elalouf's daughter, who fell in love with some boy, gave up her virginity for him and he deserted her; so she lost her mind and wandered around the streets, pulling little children by the ear.

On the road from Beer Sheva, she came up with something new: she would attack the boy with her nails, rip off his skin and poke out his eyes for what he did to this change-of-life daughter of hers. Her daughter would come back to Jerusalem with her. Which was what she promised her sister: "I'll bring her back by the hair."

From her sister Sara, Victoria already knew that her daughter was sixteen when she met him. He was an army officer and was brought in to tell them about military service for Orthodox girls. Later on, there was a fuss about letting people from the army come and poison the girls but the venom had already worked on Rivka. Cunningly, he'd send her letters, through a friend, even after he went back to his kibbutz. And she, the fool, who was known for neither grace nor beauty — even when she was a baby, people would mistake her for a boy — she fell for it, and when she was eighteen, she picked up and went to him in the desert.

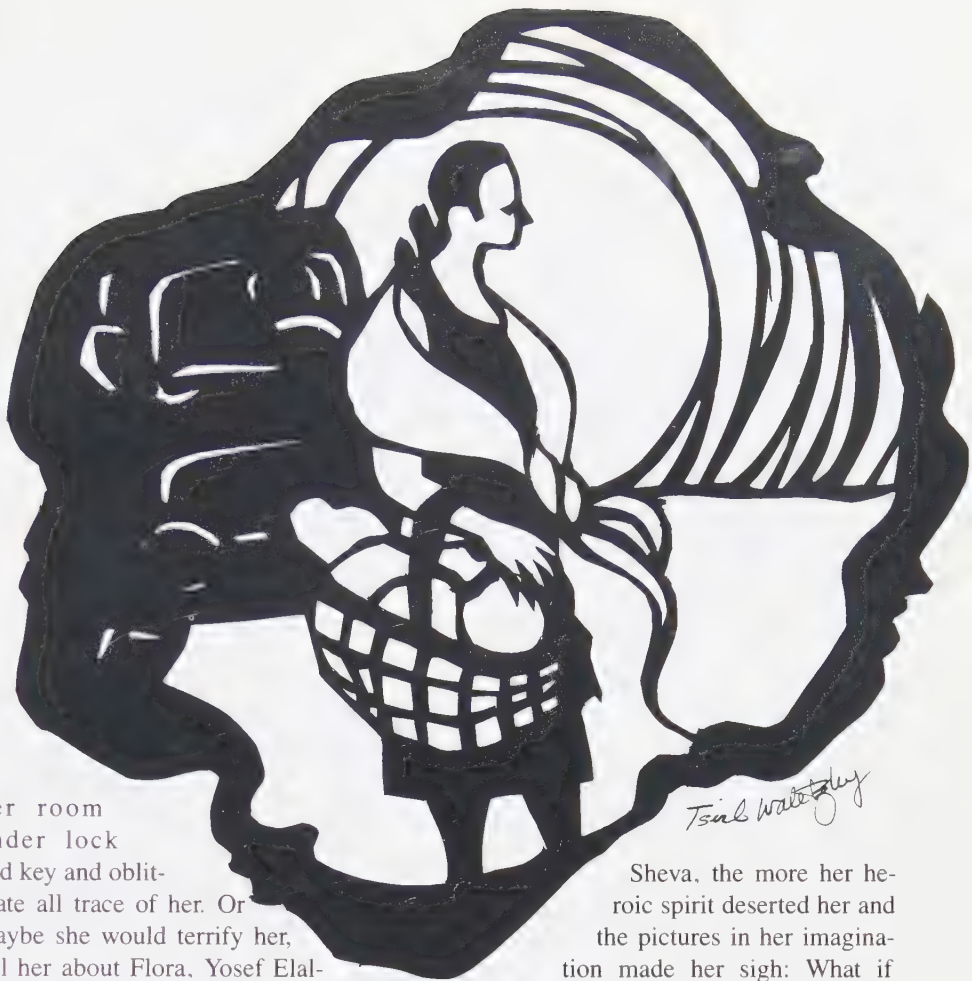
The further Victoria got from Beer

Sheva, the more her heroic spirit deserted her and the pictures in her imagination made her sigh: What if

Rivka turned her back on her and threw her out? What if the boy raised his hand to hit her? How would she spend the night if they locked her out and the bus doesn't leave till tomorrow morning? What if they didn't get her message? She didn't know anything about travelling, hadn't been out of the neighborhood since the barren Shifra Ben-Sasson of Tiberias gave birth four years ago.

But when the driver called out "Neve Midbar" again and found her in his mirror, she got off the bus, pulling her basket behind her. She stood there in the sand, the dry wind struck her throat. How could you leave the pure air and beautiful mountains of Jerusalem — and come here?

By the time she came to a path and found a woman to ask about Rivka, drops of sweat were streaming from her kerchief. Coming toward them, on the opposite path, was a girl also wearing pants whose hair was cut short. "Here's Rivka," said the woman. Just as Victoria was about to say: "That's not the one I meant" — she recognized her daughter and burst into a shout which rang like weeping. The girl put down the laundry basket she was carrying and ran to her, her head thrust forward and her eyes weeping.





"What's this . . . what's this . . ." Victoria scratched her nose. "Where are your braids? And those pants . . . That's how you dress . . . oy vey!" Rivka laughed: "I knew that's what you'd say. I wanted to get dressed but I didn't have time. I thought you'd come

on the 4 o'clock bus. When did you leave home? Six? Come on. Enough crying. Here's our room. And here's Dubi."

Stunned by the short hair, the frayed trousers with patches on the back and the shoes spotted with chicken droppings, Victoria found herself squeezed in two big arms, a fair face was close to hers and a male voice said: "Hello, Mother." Her basket was already in his hand and she — not understanding herself, her hands suddenly light — was drawn after her daughter into a shaded room and seated on a chair. There was a glass of juice in her hand at once; her eyes looked but didn't know what they saw and, later on, she'd remember only the double bed covered with a patchwork quilt and the voice of the giant with golden hair saying: "Welcome, Mother." And, as soon as she heard him say "mother" again, very clearly, she swallowed some juice which went down the wrong way and started choking and coughing; the two of them rushed to her and started pounding her on the back like a child.

"Leave me alone," she said weakly and pushed them away. "Let me look at you," she said after a moment. Once again she scolded Rivka: "What is this, those pants! Those are your Sabbath shoes?" Rivka laughed: "I'm working in the chicken coop this week. They brought in new hens. I usually work in the vegetable garden. Just this week in the chicken coop."

Wearied from the journey, confused by what she was seeing, shaken by the vicissitudes of the day and straining to repress her rage which was getting away from her in spite of herself, and always remembering her mission, Victoria sat down with her daughter Rivka and talked to her as she had never talked with her children before in her life. She didn't remember what she talked about and she didn't remember when the boy who called

her mother left, only her eyes saw and knew: her daughter's face looked good. Not since Rivka was a little girl had she seen her eyes sparkle like that. Even her short hair, Victoria admitted to herself, made her look pretty. Not like when she wore a skirt and stockings, with her broad shoulders, like a man dressed up in women's clothes.

"You don't miss the neighborhood?"

"Sometimes. On holidays. I miss the Shabbat table and the songs and Aunt Sara's laugh. But I like it here. I love

working outside with the animals . . . You too, I miss you a lot."

"And Papa?" Victoria asked in a whisper into the evening light filtering in.

"Papa doesn't care about anybody. Especially not me. All day long in the store and with his books and his prayers. Like I'm not his daughter."

"God forbid! Don't say such a thing," Victoria was scared. Of the truth.

"He wanted to marry me off to Yekutiel's son. Like I was a widow or a cripple."

Savyon Liebrecht: 'WRITING IS A NEED'

Savyon Liebrecht began writing seriously at the age of 18 while serving in the Israeli army. She had requested a military post on a kibbutz where, she strategized, "I could have a room of my own to write." One year and one "terrible" novel later, Liebrecht decided that "I wanted after all to see what the real army was like. They sent me to a military camp in the Negev, and then the Six-Day War broke out. I was close to the front," she says, without irony, "I was a secretary to a high officer."

At 33, Liebrecht began attending a weekly writers' workshop led by Amalia Kahana-Carmon. "Amalia was the first to take a story of mine and give it to an editor," says Liebrecht. This was Liebrecht's big break. "Amalia is still the first to see my stories."

Writing at a computer at her home in Holon, near Tel Aviv, Liebrecht shares her office space serially with her psychologist-husband (who was born in Italy, raised in Chile, and came to Israel 30 years ago). He sees his clients afternoons; she writes mornings and late at night.

Does Liebrecht perceive any differences between male and female fiction writers in Israel? "We cover the same topics, we write in the same styles," she says. "Women, though, tend to write later in life. We don't start writing seriously until we are in our 30's. Men — like Yehoshua, Oz, Grossman — typically start in their early 20's. We women publish around 35. We invest more energy in our personal lives, and only after the children grow up and the family is established do we start taking care of ourselves and our own needs. Writing is a need," she emphasizes.

Liebrecht notes a difference between *Dor Ha-Palmach* (the generation of writers who came of age around 1948) and her own generation of writers. "Then the central Israeli experience was war, and women were excluded from that. Now the central Israeli issues are available to both male and female writers: the conflicts between Arabs and Israelis, the way Holocaust survivors have rebuilt their lives here in Israel, the conflicts between the religious and the non-religious.

"Also, all the time now, more and more women are writing," she says. "For example, here's something new — a woman writing detective stories: Batya Gur. Also, more and more second-generation Holocaust survivors are breaking the silence that's been going on for 40 years — Lili Perry-Amitai, myself, Dorit Peleg. Such a long time has passed. There's a need now to say things out loud."

Liebrecht herself, born in Munich in 1948 and brought to Israel as an infant, is the child of survivors; her father lost his first wife and child during the Holocaust.

Besides her two collections of short stories, *Apples from the Desert* and *Horses on the Highway*, Liebrecht has written scripts for television and two (not yet produced) plays. She has two children, Maayan, 12, and Elad, 7.

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"They talked. You heard. We don't make forced matches. And anyway, Yekutiel's son is a genius."

"A pale, sick genius, like he sits in a pit all day long. And anyway, I don't love him."

"What do you think? You think love is everything?"

"What do you know about love?"

"What does that mean?" Victoria was offended and sat up straight. "This is how you talk to your mother around here?"

"You didn't love Papa and he didn't love you." Rivka ignored her and went on in the silence that descended: "I, at home ... I wasn't worth much."

"And here?" Victoria asked in a whisper.

"More."

A question began to take shape in Victoria's mind about Dubi, the fair-haired giant but the door opened, a light suddenly came on and he himself said: "Great that you're saving electricity. I brought something to eat. Yoghurt and vegetables on a new plastic plate, that's OK, isn't it? Then, Rivka, you should take Mother to Osnat's room. It's empty. She must be tired."

In the room that went out to the darkening fields, Victoria tried to get things straight in her heart. But years of dreariness had dulled her edge and yet she already knew: she wouldn't bring her daughter back to Jerusalem by the hair.

"Why did it take you half a year to come here?" Rivka asked.

"Your Papa didn't want me to come."

"And you, you don't have a will of your own?" And Victoria didn't have an answer.

When Dubi came to take her to the dining hall, she poured all her rage on him and yet she was drawn to him and that only increased her wrath.

"What's this Dubi, what kind of name is that?" Anger pulled words out of her mouth.

"It's Dov, after my mother's father. The Germans killed him in the war."

"That's a good name for a baby, Dov?" she hardened her heart against him.

"I don't mind," he shrugged and then stopped and said with comic seriousness: "But if you do — I'll change it tomorrow." She strained to keep from laughing.

In the evening, the two of them sat at the table with their eyes on Rivka as if she were all alone in the big hall, walking around with a serving cart, asking people what they wanted.

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"You want something else to drink, Mother?" she heard him ask and returned the question angrily:

"You call me mother. What kind of mother am I to you?"

"I'm dying for you to be my mother."

"Really? So, who's stopping you?" she asked and her sister Sara's mischievousness crept into her voice.

"Your daughter."

"How is she stopping you?"

"She doesn't want to be my wife."

"My daughter doesn't want to get married. That's what you're telling me?"

"Exactly."

As she was still struggling with what he said, he started telling her about the apple orchard he was growing. An American scientist who grew apples in the Nevada desert sent him special seeds. You plant them in tin cans full of organic fertilizer and they grow into trees as high as a baby with little roots and sometimes they produce fruit in the summer like a tree in the Garden of Eden. Apples love the cold, he explained as their eyes wandered after Rivka, and at night, you have to open the plastic sheets and let the desert cold in. At dawn, you have to close the sheets to preserve the cold air and keep the heat out.

"Really," she muttered, hearing these words now and thinking about what he said before. Meanwhile, somebody came to her and said: "You're Rivka's mother? Congratulations on such a daughter." And suddenly her heart swelled in her.

Then she remembered something that came back to her from long ago and far away. She was fifteen years old. On Saturdays in the synagogue, she used to exchange glances with Moshe Elkayam, the goldsmith's son, and then she would lower her eyes to the floor. In the women's section, she would push up to the wooden lattice to see his hands that worked silver and gold and precious stones. Something arose between them without any words and his sister used to smile at her in the street. But when the matchmaker came to talk to her about Shaul Abravanel, she didn't dare hurt her father who wanted a scholar for a son-in-law.

At night, when Rivka took her back to

her room, she said: "You came to take me back to Jerusalem, right?"

Her mother chose not to answer. After a pause, she said apropos of nothing: "Don't do anything dumb."

"I know what I want. Don't worry about me."

Victoria plucked up her courage: "Is it true what he told me, that you don't want to marry him?"

"That's what he told you?"

"Yes or no?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I'm not sure yet."

"Where did you learn that?"

"From you."

"How?" Victoria was amazed.

"I don't want to live like you and Papa."

"How?"

"Without love."

"Again love!" She beat her thighs until they trembled. A gesture of rage without rage. They reached the door. Victoria thought a moment about the bed with the patchwork quilt and heard herself asking: "And the *Sh'ma* at bedtime, do you say that?"

"No."

"You don't say the *Sh'ma*?"

"Only sometimes, silently. So even I don't hear it myself," said Rivka, laughed and kissed her mother on the cheek. Then she said: "Don't get scared if you hear jackals. Goodnight." Like a mother soothing her child.

Facing the bare sand dunes stretching soft lines into the frame of her window as into the frame of a picture, Victoria said a fervent prayer, for both of them, her and Rivka. Her heart both heavy and light: "... Let not my thoughts trouble me, nor evil dreams, nor evil fancies, but let my rest be perfect before Thee..."

And at night she dreamed.

In the dream a man approaches white curtains and she sees him from behind. The man moves the curtain aside and the trees of the Garden of Eden are in front of him: the tree of life and the tree of knowledge and beautiful trees in cans of organic fertilizer. The man goes to the apple tree, there is a lot of fruit on it and the fruit drops off and rolls into his hands and, suddenly, the fruit is small and turns into stones. Victoria sees: handfuls of precious stones and gold and silver in his white fingers. Suddenly, the man turns his face and it's Moshe Elkayam the goldsmith's

son and his hair is flaming.

All the way back to Sha'arei Hesed she sat, her eyes still holding onto their rage but her heart soothed, her basket at her feet and, on her lap, a sack of apples hard as stones that Dubi gave her. She remembered her daughter asking: "You see that everything's fine, right?" — her fingers on her mother's cheek; and Dubi's voice saying: "It'll be fine, Mother."

All the way, she pondered what she would tell her husband and her sister. Maybe she would sit them down and tell exactly what happened to her. When the bus passed the junction, she considered it. How could she describe to her sister, who had never known a man, or to her husband, who had never touched her with love — how could she describe the boy's eyes on her daughter's face? When the mountains of Jerusalem appeared in the distance, she knew what she would do.

From her sister, who could read her mind; she wouldn't keep a secret. She'd pull her kerchief aside, put her mouth up to her ear, like when they were children, and whisper: "Sarike, we've spent our lives alone, you without a husband and me with one. My little daughter taught me something. And us, remember how we thought she was a bit backward, God forbid? How I used to cry over her? No beauty, no grace, no intelligence or talent and as tall as Og, King of Bashan. We wanted to marry her off to Yekutiel and they were doing us a favor, like Abravanel's daughter wasn't good enough for them. Just look at her now!" — Here she would turn her face to the side and spit spiritedly against the evil eye. "Milk and honey. Smart too. And laughing all the time. Maybe, with God's help, we'll get pleasure from her."

And to her husband, who never read her heart, she would give apples in honey, put both hands on her hips and say: "We don't have to worry about Rivka. It's good for her there, thank God. We'll hear good things from her soon. Now, taste that and tell me: apples that ripen in summer and they put them in organic fertilizer and their roots are small — did you ever hear of such a thing in your life?"

Translated from the Hebrew by Barbara Harshav

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The BED

A story by Shulamit Lapid

The young man stood in the street, behind the hedge, trying to talk to the figure sprawled out under the big motorcycle. The grease-stained overalls moved and Ayala roared "What?" in the rough voice she used for strangers.

"I'm looking for Miriam. Miriam Sarid."

Ayala slid out from under the wheels of the motorcycle. Since he didn't look like one of those pests who come to gawk at the motorcycle repair woman, she stood up straight and stared curiously at him.

"Come on in," she invited, waving her dirty hand. But the young man stared at her in amazement and stammered: "I thought you . . . I mean . . . that is . . ."

"Yeah, yeah!" she cut him off impatiently. "I know. I *am* a girl and do me a favor, don't ask what's a nice girl like me doing fixing motorcycles!"

"What's a nice girl like you doing fixing motorcycles?" he smiled. "I'm Doron."

All the while, Miriam was standing at the kitchen sink, peeping out into the yard through the slats of the shutter, her heart pounding.

He was taller than she had imagined and thinner too. His nose was fleshy and his big ears stuck out like fins. His hair was soft and brown and his neck was too thin. Miriam was surprised to find she was disappointed. What did she expect?

"I'm Ayala," the girl began talking as she let Doron in. "But everybody calls me Avigdor."

"So, you folks finally remembered Miriam," complained Ayala.

"What do you mean, 'you folks'?"

"She's been here for half a year now! What if she was sick? I was hoping she'd take care of me and it turns out that I have to take care of her!"

Miriam was surprised at that. So, the girl's been taking care of her.

When they decided in the kibbutz that

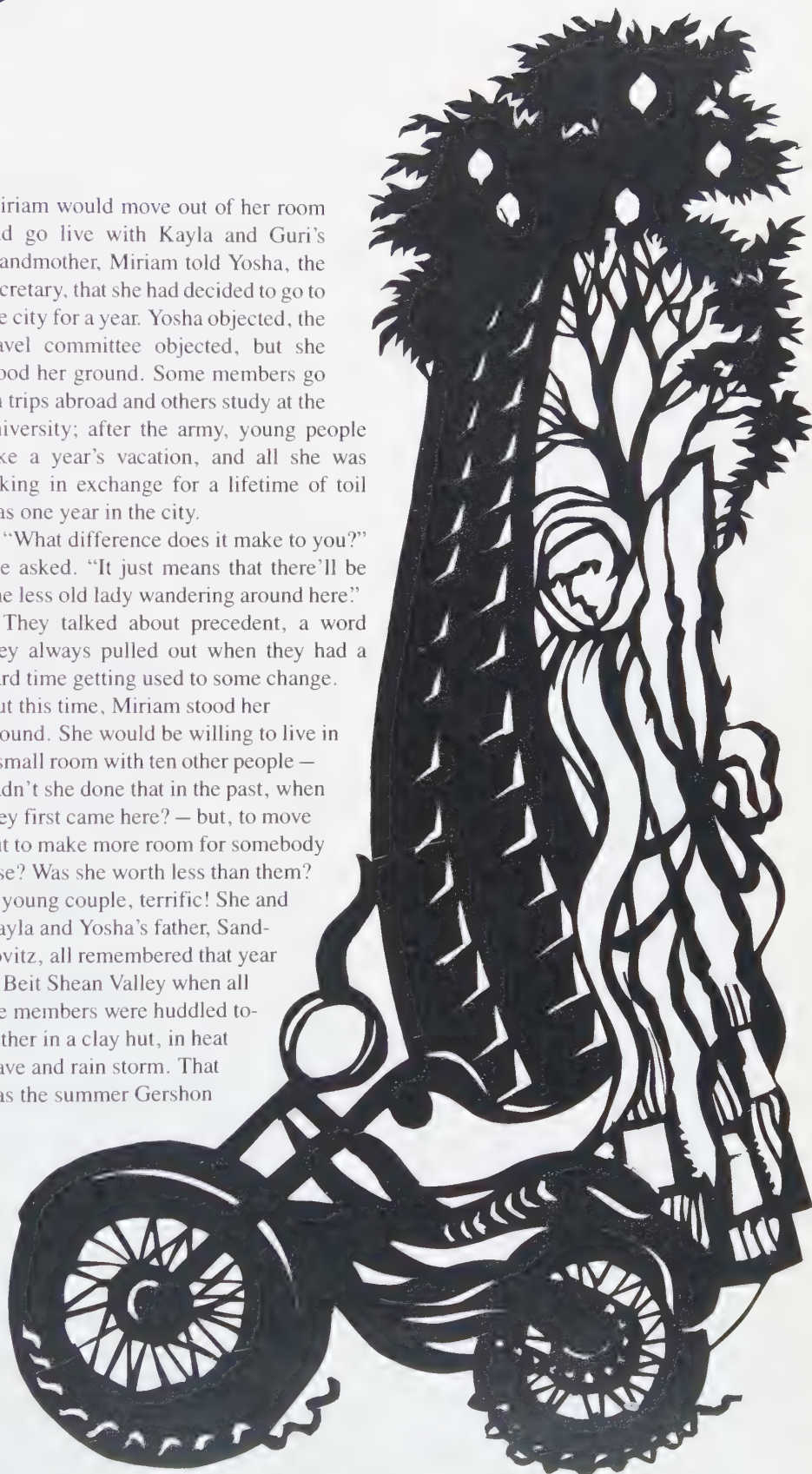
Miriam would move out of her room and go live with Kayla and Guri's grandmother, Miriam told Yosha, the secretary, that she had decided to go to the city for a year. Yosha objected, the travel committee objected, but she stood her ground. Some members go on trips abroad and others study at the university; after the army, young people take a year's vacation, and all she was asking in exchange for a lifetime of toil was one year in the city.

"What difference does it make to you?" she asked. "It just means that there'll be one less old lady wandering around here."

They talked about precedent, a word they always pulled out when they had a hard time getting used to some change.

But this time, Miriam stood her ground. She would be willing to live in a small room with ten other people — hadn't she done that in the past, when they first came here? — but, to move out to make more room for somebody else? Was she worth less than them?

A young couple, terrific! She and Kayla and Yosha's father, Sandkovitz, all remembered that year in Beit Shean Valley when all the members were huddled together in a clay hut, in heat wave and rain storm. That was the summer Gershon



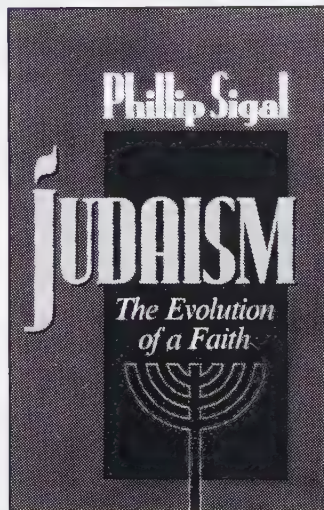
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came from Rehovot where he was a teacher. He planned to give them a hand and wound up staying with them. During the day, they uprooted couch grass and whoever could still stand up at night would dance. It was Gershon's voice that won her heart, his full, unbridled singing. In the spring, they made them a *chupa* on pitchforks.

It was seven years before the kibbutz children were big enough for Gershon to go back to teaching. In the corridor of the school was a picture of the first choir. Gershon stands among the little singers. Now the picture was hidden in a suitcase under her bed. At Pesach, they painted the school. And all of a sudden, a three-dimensional picture of a cat and kittens appeared on the wall. Miriam asked Ronit where the picture of Gershon was and

Ronit pulled it out of a heap of old pamphlets that had been stuffed in a box. Ronit, Sandkovitz's granddaughter, had studied education at the university and had her own firm principles. Miriam took the picture out of the box, dusted it off and said to herself: "You're lucky, Gershon!"

The bereavement was hers alone and there was plenty. Hanoch, her eldest, fell in the battle of Latrun in '48 and the two of them buried him. But she buried Nissan, the younger one, all by herself. He was killed at Tel Azaziat on June 9, 1967, two days after his forty-second birthday. The little family walked to the cemetery. She and Ilana, her daughter-in-law, Nadav, her grandson, and Tamar, her granddaughter. Nadav fell at the Suez Canal, and his sister Tamar wandered around in Europe for a year like a madwoman. A Swedish volunteer on the kibbutz won her heart and Miriam — unlike Ilana — gave her blessing.

God knows what sage decided to put the three bereaved old women together in one

Shulamit Lapid: 'THIS IS POLITICS'

"I used to write a lot about women who do men's work," says Shulamit Lapid, speaking by phone from her home in Tel Aviv. "I wanted to change the image of women in society. But now I don't try to change society, I try to depict society. For example, there was a rape in Tel Aviv a few years ago. Everyone told jokes about it. I was outraged. So I wrote an aggressive story about the rape of a male. I published it in a glossy magazine which had naked women all over the cover. Everyone remembers this story. I was making a political point."

Lapid, who describes herself as "small, delicate, more and more aggressive" and a "ripe 54," does not consider herself a feminist. Still, she says, "I write mostly about women. I feel more deeply for their plight. I confine myself to women's subjects: husband and wife, old age, young strivings."

"Why don't I write about politics and wars?" she asks rhetorically, "because I am interested in a different kind of politics. My current play, 'Abandoned Property,' describes three women standing in a kitchen — this is politics."

"If you're a good writer," she continues, "you are accepted here in Israel — male or female. And even if we're best-sellers, none of us can support ourselves by our writing — male or female." Lapid is a startlingly prolific writer, having published three books of collected stories, three novels, three plays and five children's books — all in Hebrew. Still, to explain why she was 35 before her work was published, and why "there are so few female novelists here; most women are poets," she quotes Shulamit Hareven as: "When the children are small, we write poetry. When they grow up, we write short stories. When they leave home, we write novels."

Lapid is a former chair of the Israeli Writers' Association. Her father, husband and son are journalists and writers. (Her son, at 25, just published his first novel.) Her daughter, 23, is "not a writer, thank God. She is studying to be a psychologist."

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room which she secretly called the "ghetto." "I'd rather choose my own exile," she answered Kayla when she came to tell Miriam about the proposal. Miriam wasn't one of those who yelled. All her life, she had bowed her back and her spirit. But this time, she decided to go to the city and she stood firm until finally they gave in.

At night, when all was still on the kibbutz, Miriam took a spade and began digging patiently until she had uprooted the cactus that grew at the entrance to the house. Gershon had planted it when they came to live there. Over the years it had grown and now it was a tall tree. No one would notice that it was missing. Except for her, it was only a part of a landscape whose details no one noticed anymore.

In the city, she spent her first two days in a cheap hotel, scared and wondering if she had done the right thing. Then she found an ad in the paper announcing "room to rent in exchange for housekeeping." She went to the address and found a twenty-year-old landlady.

The house was in an old neighborhood of Tel Aviv. A lemon tree was blooming in the yard of the little house, and a vine twisted around the ledge of the back porch between the clotheslines and the storeroom which was now used as a garage. Young men on motorcycles, with their energy and noise, came and went from morning to night.

It was Avigdor, Ayala's brother, who had turned the storeroom into a garage. The tools were arranged on the shelves along with rows of jars in pigeonholes containing all kinds of nails and screws. "Every instrument here has its place and purpose," Ayala explained to her one day; "and nothing ever got lost except Avigdor."

Avigdor came back from the fortification, where he had been surrounded by Arabs for 68 hours, hovering in the air, weightless, with the lost smile of wreckage in the depths. He was scared of machines and noises; people were scared of him. A family in a naturalist agricultural settlement agreed to take him in and there he sat all day long, singing quietly, eating rice, wheat and bran.

Ayala's father, who had been in America for ten years, went on running his laundromats and Ayala's mother, whose heart was broken by grief for her son, decided to give in to her husband and go to America with him. Ayala refused to go with her. She opened the garage, hired a reliable

fellow and worked as his apprentice until she learned the craft.

Young men who came to the garage asking for her brother all got the same answer: "I'm Avigdor now" and finally the name stuck to her. As time went by, people got used to the girl in dirty overalls bent over the big motorcycles.

The two women, the old and the young, lived together nicely. Miriam enjoyed keeping house for Ayala, enjoyed shopping, enjoyed cooking. The first two months, she was afraid she would use up her monthly allowance and would have to go back to the kibbutz in disgrace. But then she found that she could support herself and even afford some luxuries. In the morning, she'd stop at a cafe next to the supermarket, order a piece of cake and a glass of juice and sit there for a long time next to the other ladies, read the newspaper and eavesdrop on her neighbors' conversations.

"I'm a real city girl!" she'd smile to herself and yet she knew that her self-imposed isolation was enveloping her more and more thickly. Maybe that's why she answered an ad in the paper. A twenty-two year old soldier, who liked music and travel, was looking for a pen pal. "He didn't say how old the pen pal had to be," she reasoned.

Doron, the young soldier, wrote that he was from Netanya, a gunner, with eight more months to go before he finished his army service. And, he sent her a picture.

Miriam wrote that she was a sales agent for a big cosmetics company and was on the road most of the time, travelling from city to city and didn't get home very much. She made up a biography and a character, with oval eyes, short hair, a good figure and smooth skin. She listened closely to pick up idioms Ayala and her friends used and was careful not to be solemn or sentimental. She gradually discovered an interesting vocabulary and even bought a dictionary of colloquial Hebrew so she could understand what Doron was talking about when he said they were hassling him or screwing him. Miriam felt sorry for that kid who was having such a bad time. Her hands, the hands of an old peasant woman, felt a yearning to caress. Skin touching skin. When she was young and loved, she had followed in the rut of the ascetic society around her but now, from the remnants of herself, she created a charming golden girl.



"Over and over and over again, I've asked you for a picture and you, you bad girl, you don't send me one!" he complained in his last letter. "I want to dream about you sometimes. I promise to love you, although you're a dwarf and a hunchback." Well, a dwarf and a hunchback she wasn't, just a wrinkled 67-year-old grandmother.

Miriam slipped out of the kitchen to her room and then out into the street. Wearing her robe, she seemed to sleepwalk to the sea, wandered around here and there until she sat down under an awning, stunned. She tried to guess what was happening now between Ayala and Doron. At last the truth had come out and now both of them were surprised and laughing!

A few feet away, two men were playing paddleball, spraying sand to her lap. The monotonous banging of the ball finally put her to sleep.

It was five o'clock by the time she awoke. Miriam stood still for a while, seeing shapes and silhouettes, wondering what happened. Then she remembered.

The tools had vanished from the path, the motorcycle was gone from the porch and the house was empty. Miriam took her suitcase out from under the bed, threw her things into it, took a shower and slipped quickly out of the house.

She reached the kibbutz at midnight. Shlomo Sandkovitz came on her near the cow shed and blared out: "Came back, hey?"

She laughed and answered: "All good things come to an end," as she rehearsed during the long bus ride. She wondered where she would spend the night. Slowly, she opened the screen door of the "ghetto." Guri's grandmother (the old woman was only five years older than Miriam) was sprawled out, her head back, her mouth wide open like a black cavern with choked snores emanating from it. The smell of old age and decay lingered in the room. Kayla

muttered some long, unintelligible sentence. Tomorrow, as always, she'd tell what she had dreamed. Miriam tiptoed out, leaving her suitcase on the floor of the porch. In the children's house, she found an empty bed and lay down, pulling her legs up under her dress.

In the morning, she ran around the kibbutz from one person to another, shouting: "I came back!" — like someone who found a treasure. Happy as a lark, she latched onto people, telling and asking until they began to wonder if something was wrong with Miriam. Maybe the whole trip was simply a symptom of something wrong which they didn't understand. They began to avoid her and to hurry to work. Miriam had a new style, insolent and loud — urban! — she who had always worked hard as an ant, borne every burden, now squared her drooping shoulders and demanded this and that. That very morning, she went to Yosha Sandkovitz and demanded he put her back in her old room.

"You won't get rid of me!" Miriam persisted. "Gershon's dead but I'm still alive!"

"You don't understand! We're trying to make it easy for you. Something might happen to you, you could fall down the stairs, you might feel sick. You're the youngest one, take care of Kayla and Rachel and, when the time comes, somebody else will take care of you."

She left him with a scornful snort and slammed the door so hard the glass shattered. The sound of breaking glass was music to her ears.

From the secretary's office, Miriam went to the "ghetto" and dragged out her bed. The legs of the bed plowed deep furrows in the earth. Now and then, Miriam would sit down to catch her breath. Finally she reached her destination: She put the bed down on the lawn near her old room. Then she went back and dragged her suitcase here too and stuck it under the bed.

The kibbutzniks gathered around. Some of them burst out laughing when they saw "Miriam's residence;" others shouted: "You should be ashamed of yourself!" Children called out: "Can we come in?" and "When are you gonna paint?" and other such jokes. Miriam stared stubbornly into space, her jaw clamped shut.

The crowd streaming to "Miriam's residence" disturbed the young couple who had taken over her room. When two weeks went by and she was still planted in their midst like a sore, Nir went to Yosha and shouted: "You know what it is to have children all day and grownups all night right under your nose? We don't have a drop of privacy, none! I'm not leaving you alone until you come and throw her out! Either there was a decision or there wasn't!"

"If you have complaints," Yosha pleaded with Miriam, "come to me —"

"I did! That helped a lot!"

"Think of the young couple! Nir's one of us, but Ophra! You know what kind of name we're going to have?"

"And my suffering doesn't count? They're cleaning Gershon's smell off the walls! What's this? I can't even be outside? So throw me out and be done with it!"

"What are you talking about?" shouted Yosha to the delight of the children surrounding him. "We want what's good for you! It's not healthy to sleep outside! You could catch a cold or a scorpion might bite you!"

"Fine! At least you'll bury me next to Gershon, I hope!"



Yosha Sandkovitz gave up. He turned around, pushed aside the children in his way and took off. Miriam dragged out the suitcase and put it on the bed. She took out the family pictures and lined them up along the mattress, one next to the other.

Dust dropped out of the trees and insects rustled. A humming put Miriam to sleep. From the babble of distant sounds rose the roar of a motorcycle approaching. The motorcycle stopped abruptly next to Miriam's bed and Ayala jumped off. Miriam, awakened with a start, sucked her lips in embarrassment and, at last, said: "This is Gershon," touching the famous picture. "He set up the first children's choir in the kibbutz."

Ayala handed Miriam a bundle of letters. Miriam identified the handwriting on the envelopes. "He's angry?" she asked.

"He thinks I'm the one who wrote the letters," answered Ayala.

From the suitcase, Miriam took out an old leather wallet and, from it, she took a brown envelope with Doron's letters. The ceremony of exchanging letters took place without a word. Miriam cleared her throat, finally steadied her breath, stood up and said to Ayala: "Please help me."

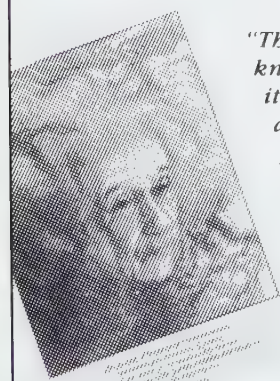
The two of them put the big suitcase on the mattress and then carried the bed together to Miriam's new room. Miriam kicked open the door and burst inside, waking up Kayla and Rachel: "Hi there, beauties!" she shouted. "I'm moving in!"

Translated from the Hebrew by Barbara Harshav

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Barbara Harshav lives in North Haven, Connecticut. She translates from Hebrew, French, German and Yiddish. Her forthcoming translations include The Court Jesters by Avigdor Dagan (Jewish Publication Society) and Memoires Juives by Lucette Valensi and Nathan Wachtel (University of California Press).

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COMING OUT IN THE JEWISH FAMILY

A little more than a year ago, Rabbi Stacy Offner's life was in flux. Offner, a lesbian, had decided no longer to be

silent about her sexuality, sparking a bitter controversy over her tenure at the reform synagogue in St. Paul, Minnesota, where she had officiated for three years. Under extreme pressure, she resigned.

Yet for Offner, an episode which had seemed like the end of a career has turned into a promising beginning. Several months after her resignation, she was approached by members of her former congregation who had broken away to start a congregation of their own. They wanted Offner to be their spiritual leader. In August 1988, Offner became the rabbi of Congregation Shir Tikvah, the first synagogue ever knowingly to hire a lesbian rabbi.

The congregation, which held its first meetings in a pizza parlor, has grown from 40 to 105 households — of which approximately ten percent are gay. It has a religious school and a temporary home in the Jewish Community Center of St. Paul. At Offner's first service, on Rosh Hashannah, 400 people showed up, a quarter of them attending an open house afterward in her home, where she lives with her partner and her partner's two teen-aged children. Offner says, "With this congregation, I can be a proud parent — a whole person."

In recent years, lesbians have become increasingly visible in America. Spurred by recent court decisions, they are living together more openly and, due to modern science, they are

having babies or adopting children in such numbers that some jokingly refer to a lesbian baby boom.

Yet the taboo against homosexuality — which runs deep in Jewish culture and religion — has made "coming out" a difficult process, especially for Jewish women. Jewish lesbians suffer from "invisibility," which, says Evelyn Torton Beck, editor of *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989) often has a "trivializing, disempowering and ultimately debilitating effect." Those who reveal their sexual orientation do so in careful, incremental steps, first, to peers within the gay community, next to family and friends, then to the community-at-large or work environment. "When you decide to come out as a lesbian, you are putting yourself on the line," continues Beck. "You risk your family, your friends, your job. In spite of that, you remain totally invisible."

Yet visibility, with the reward of being true to oneself, has a price — as many Jewish lesbians who have come out discover. "Jewish families have both a harder — and an easier — time accepting gay children," explains Aron Cooper, a San Francisco psychologist who produced the documentary, "Parents Come Out," about parents whose children are gay. "It's easier because of the Jewish tradition of liberal tolerance and respect for human rights; it's harder for Jewish parents because of the emphasis on being part of a family and having children — and the myth that lesbians don't have children," he says. In Jewish culture the focus on the family is strong, and the pressure to procreate is great spurred both by religious injunction and by Jewish history.

"I am not just my parents' child. I am an

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GAY CHILDREN

BY CARLA
CANTOR

historical event whose role is to make up for lives that were lost," says one 35-year old lesbian whose parents survived concentration camps. It took her twelve years to tell her parents about her homosexuality. Now, she and her partner are thinking about adopting a child.

"If a man doesn't marry, it's societally acceptable. If your daughter doesn't marry a doctor or a lawyer," says Aron Cooper, "you aren't going to

bian clients primarily. In fact many Jewish parents are quite supportive, comprising a large percentage of the leadership in organizations such as Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (Parents-FLAG) that serve as support groups for parents of gay and lesbian children.

Paulette Goodman, national president of the federation of local groups of Parents-FLAG, recalled that when her daughter first told her she was a lesbian, "I thought that she was just angry and rebelling against me. Then I saw a slide show of a gay pride march and saw gays in wheelchairs, deaf gays and blind gays holding banners, and realized that they wouldn't have *chosen* to be gay on top of their disability. Their being lesbian or gay wasn't a matter of choice — it is who they are." After that realization she was more accepting of her own daughter's identity as a lesbian. She now comments, "We have to help our children be the best they can be no matter what their sexual orientation."

A Washington, DC, attorney and lesbian mother of two children was proud of her parents last year when they marched in a gay rights demonstration in their hometown of Durham, North Carolina. That kind of support, she said, did not come overnight. "My parents are Conservative, religious Jews. It has taken them years to be comfortable with my sexuality, but they were never rejecting."

When the lawyer had her first lesbian relationship at age 22, her parents sent her to Israel to get over it. Six years ago, when she and her female partner decided to have a child through artificial insemination, her parents were uncomfortable with the idea. But through the children — they have a five-year-old and a five-month-old — her relationship with them has grown. "Since we had a family, my parents have become much closer to my lover. They are selective about whom they tell, sometimes even guarded, but then they can be quite open — like marching in a demonstration."

"At first I couldn't believe it when my daughter told me she was gay," said a retired New York City school teacher. "I thought she was rushing into something and needed to give it more thought." Later when her daughter asked her to participate in a radio discussion of homosexuality, she refused because she was frightened she would lose her job. This caused a lot of anger between them. But now she says, "I love my daughter's lesbian partner and only wish that married people could be as happy as they are."

According to Rosenbaum, a parent's basic psychological structure will determine how well she or he works the issue through, and it is the single most important factor in determining how

WHEN MY DAUGHTER TOLD ME

SHE WAS GAY," SAID A RETIRED NEW YORK CITY

SCHOOL TEACHER, "I THOUGHT SHE WAS RUSHING

INTO SOMETHING."

run and tell your neighbors. If she is a lesbian, you certainly aren't going to tell them." And in fact, few parents, even those who have accepted their daughters' gayness, are willing to talk about it publicly.

When a child turns out to be gay, most parents suffer tremendous guilt and shame. When Cooper searched for parents of gay children for his film, he contacted dozens of rabbis in the San Francisco Bay area. Not one had ever had a member of his or her congregation confide that a child was gay. "The stigma is too great," says Cooper. "Parents feel it is their fault, that the family life was disturbed or dysfunctional in some way."

Bernice Becker, a San Francisco Jewish community worker, said that when her older daughter "came out" to her over 25 years ago she had no one to turn to. "Years later I visited a doctor, who was also a Lubavitch rabbi and he told me, 'You have been cursed by God.' But I never blamed myself. I thought of it as some kind of passing phase." She also encouraged her daughter to see a therapist who told Becker that her daughter was "too feminine" to be a lesbian. Both Becker's daughters are gay, and it has taken her a long time to accept this. "What made it easier for me was that I've always been open-minded and accepting of non-traditional attitudes and behavior."

On the other hand, once having dealt with some of the shock, anger and guilt, a Jewish parent often finds a way to come to terms with a child's homosexuality. "Some parents actually sit *shiva* for a gay child, but that reaction is extremely rare," says Dr. Robert Rosenbaum, a Princeton psychologist who treats gay and les-

well the parent will adapt. Some parents will try to talk a child out of it. Others may accept the child and her lover but never acknowledge the nature of the relationship. Still others will fully embrace it.

Linda Holtzman, a Philadelphia rabbi, told her parents she was a lesbian seven years ago. Since then, she and her partner have had two children — her partner gave birth three years ago and Linda last July. “When I told my mother I was thinking of getting pregnant she wanted to disappear. When I actually did, she changed dramatically. She realized it would be the only way she would have a grandchild,” said Holtzman, an only child. But her mother, she said, has never acknowledged the relationship — not to others, nor to herself. “She tells people that her daughter is into her thirties, not involved in a relationship and wanted to have a baby before it was too late. She still doesn’t understand why my partner is financially responsible for my son should something happen to me. She thinks it should be her. She just doesn’t get it.”

As difficult as it may be to come out in the Jewish family, for most lesbians, the Jewish community at large is that much harder to crack. Modern Jewish practice has come a long way since the Bible legislated that, “If a man should lie with a man as with a woman, both have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood shall be upon them,” but Orthodox Judaism still condemns homosexuality. The Conservative movement is considering the issue, and Reform and Reconstructionist movements have passed resolutions which oppose discrimination on the basis of lifestyle or sexual preferences. But, according to gays and lesbians, most synagogues do not welcome those with alternative lifestyles.

In a situation similar to Stacy Offner’s, the decision to come out also cost Linda Holtzman her job. For four years as a rabbi of a straight congregation she had no trouble staying in the closet — until she and her partner decided they wanted children. Even then, she didn’t tell the congregation about her sexuality, but asked that time off for co-parenting be written into her contract. “They freaked out about that — a single woman having a baby,” said Holtzman. “But I believe, on some level, they knew.” Holtzman resigned and took a part-time position at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College of Philadelphia, where she had been ordained.

Frustrated and rebuffed by prejudice, lesbians and gays are increasingly turning to alternative congregations for acceptance. There are 25 gay and lesbian congregations across the country, the largest of them in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. For some, these congregations

are the answer. But for others, they are not enough. A good number wish to remain loyal to their branch of Judaism — the alternative congregations tend to be unaffiliated — and those with children are searching for synagogues that can support religious schools.

To be accepted into mainstream Judaism is still the dominant wish for many gays and lesbians. Jewish gay leaders are concerned that negative attitudes and the unwillingness of organized religion to bend are chasing many away from Judaism altogether — something the faith cannot afford. “When I go around the country making speeches, the major thing I discover is the unwillingness of Jews to see us as a people within the community,” says Evelyn Torton Beck, who, in addition to her writing, is a professor and director of the Women’s Studies Program at the University of Maryland and a professor in the school’s Judaic Studies Program.

According to Beck, a Holocaust survivor, for many lesbians, being gay and being Jewish are intertwined. “When you put yourself at risk as a lesbian, you are more willing to come out as a Jew — and face the anti-Semitism that goes with it. Once you begin focusing upon who you are, you get in touch with who you were when you were younger. Unexpectedly it is then that many discover their Judaism.”



NCE

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Beck is hopeful that as more lesbians come out and people begin to talk about these issues there will be a gradual acceptance, and lesbian Jews will feel less isolated. The Washington, DC, attorney belongs to a gay synagogue; her daughter attends the Hebrew school of a straight congregation. She is optimistic: “I’m concerned that both my children will have to put up with a lot of bigotry, but I believe that in the end the Jewish community will be more accepting. My own dream is to be comfortable someday in a heterogeneous synagogue — and that it becomes a support in my family’s life.”

Carla Cantor is a freelance writer who specializes in family and health issues. She lives in New Jersey.

WILL AND TESTAMENT

*Women's legacies
from the Bible
to Brooklyn*

By
*Mary Cahn
Schwartz*

My mother and I have a strange ritual. Like any meaningful ritual, it energizes, calms, and nurtures. It is simple.

We talk about her will.

I am 53; she is 81. We have been doing this for years. When my husband overhears these conversations, he is appalled and quickly exits. How can you talk about anything so morbid? he exclaims.

So, this is clearly not a ritual for everyone.

A few years ago, my mother had some heart trouble and spent a week in the hospital. For endless hours, by her hospital bed, we did a variation on our ritual. We made lists, then changed the lists, then made new lists again. Who would get what *if . . .*? Both of us were exhausted from worry and stress, but somehow we could always get up the energy for this.

What's it all about? Why does adrenalin flow when we decide who will get the pearl pin, who the silver bowl? I have wondered if this is about my own greed, or my mother's desire to control from the grave. Perhaps.

But I think, on some deeper level, we are attempting no less a feat than defying illness and possibly death. My husband and brother don't want to talk about the will, and my mother and I talk about it obsessively, but all of us are, in fact, dealing with the same thing: aging and death, even the death of ourselves.

So my mother and I enact our comfortable ritual. Even after death, our conversations imply, my mother will continue to give me nurturance; I will continue to receive it. Continuity.

I am a family therapist, and I often ask clients

if they have discussed their parents' wills with them. The answers tell me a lot about the family's communication patterns. The planning around the inheritance, however big or small, is an important developmental task for a family. Who does it, who knows what, who helps, who doesn't, who is brought in, who is left out, who is perceived as being competent, who is perceived as being particularly in need. All these are important questions for the family.

Think of those opening scenes in mystery stories: the lawyer reads, the family gasps. Who knew what? Who was in on the secrets? *Were* there any secrets?

I looked at my own tradition for some precedents around this family task, and I found that, in fact, in Genesis inheritance is a major theme. Abraham is starting a new religion, and the bestowal of the blessing (that is, the reading of the will) is a key event. Stories focus on who will be anointed to carry on the great work. Who will be the chosen one of the Chosen People?

There are two central scenes in Genesis where we witness the "will" of the patriarch: Isaac's blessing of his son Jacob, and Jacob's long, detailed blessing of his sons and grandchildren.

These wills are shared *before* death, not after. When I read Jacob's complicated blessing of his children, there seems to be some of the same feeling that my mother and I have when we discuss her will. There is something stirring, bold and real about receiving knowledge of the inheritance while everyone can still talk and look at each other.

Of course, as in so many scenes in the Bible, one has to ask, where are the women? We know

where Rebecca was. Because she was operating in a patriarchal system, she is a figure who has to be devious. Her husband Isaac, old, blind, and not totally competent, has the power to give the blessing. Rebecca plots with her son Jacob, the younger twin, to make sure *he* receives it, and not his brutish brother Esau.

The background of this story is important: Before Rebecca, there is Sarah. Sarah, like most Jewish women in Genesis, has a fertility problem. Finally, late in life, she has her miracle child, Isaac. She guards and overprotects her son, promising herself that he will never be in danger. She persuades Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael into the desert, so that Isaac will have no difficulty, no competition.

And yet, it is this child, Isaac, whose own father is willing to have him killed. Never mind that it is God's test for Abraham. Sarah will find out that unbeknownst to her, and certainly without her permission, her beloved, overprotected child was brought by her husband up the mountain for the express purpose of having him killed. Legend has it that Sarah dies of a heart attack when she finally hears the story.

So to return to Rebecca, Rebecca must have heard of this terrible event, must have been told that Sarah, her mother-in-law, although beloved and respected by her husband Abraham, was still cut off from information and decision-making around this key

plot. Rebecca knows that knowledge is power. And so she eavesdrops on Isaac and their first-born Esau, and decides to become the writer and director of this inheritance drama. Isaac, allegedly duped by his wife and his younger son (it's possible that he *feigned* being duped), gives the blessing to Jacob (disguised as his brother Esau with hairy arms) . . . and the rest is history.

Many years pass now, and Jacob is on his own deathbed. This time there are not two sons — one in the will, the other cut out — but twelve. (Dinah, the only daughter, is absent, having no role in an inheritance scene.) And the blessings are steamy, insulting, vengeful, prophetic, laudatory. Reuben, the first son, gets praise: "Reuben . . . my might and first fruit of my vigor, exceeding in rank, and exceeding in honor," but then — vitriolic — "Unstable as water, you shall excel no longer! For when you mounted your father's bed, you brought disgrace." (First-borns seem to have a hard time in Genesis). Simeon and Levi get chastised for their character flaws of aggressiveness; Judah gets A pluses ("The scepter shall not depart from Judah"); Joseph an A minus for courage and staying power; Benjamin, much beloved son, gets a strange one-liner: "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; in the morning he consumes the

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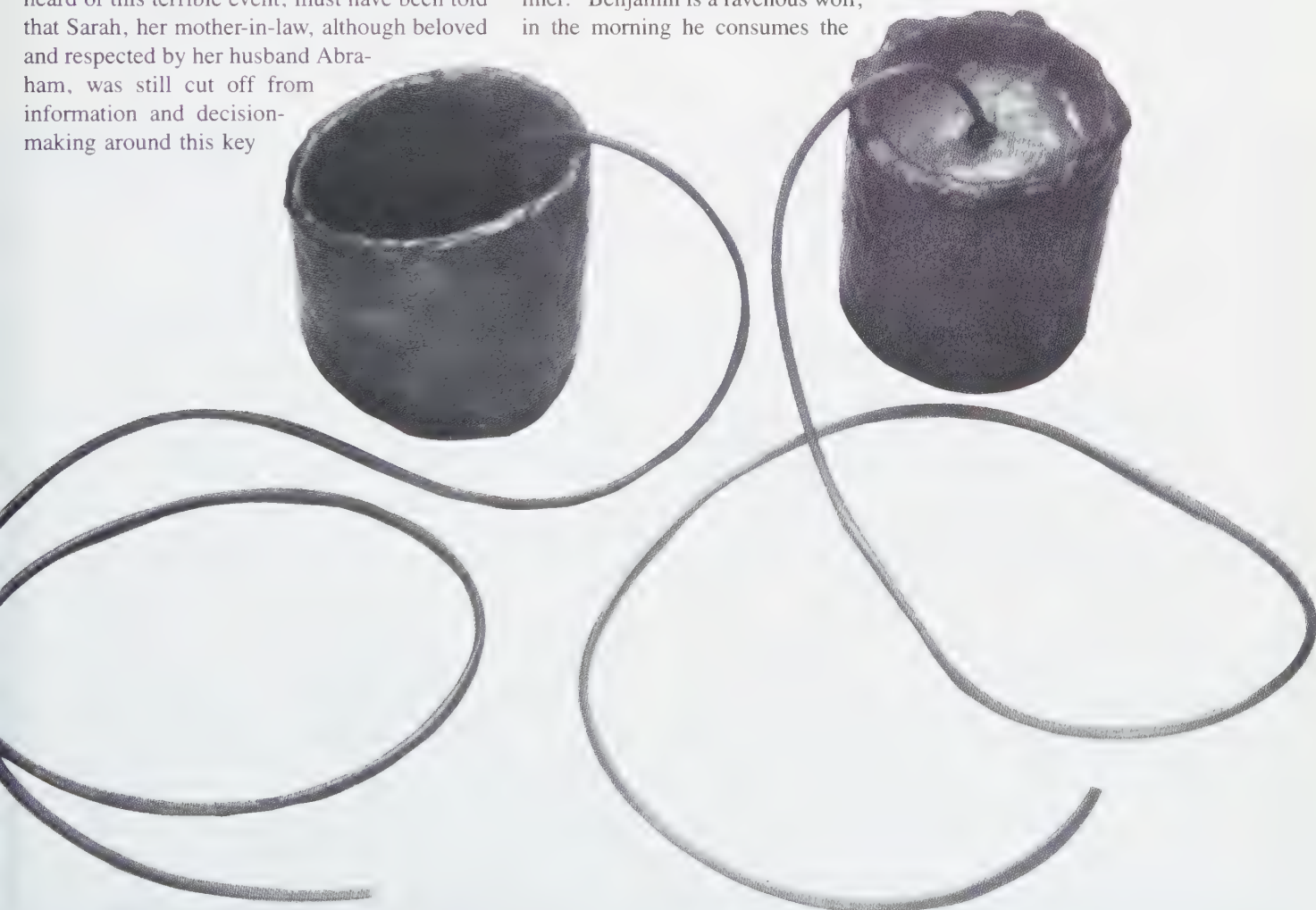


Photo from Eva Hesse: Sculpture by Bill Barrette (New York: Timken, 1989). Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

Blessings and
 curses, slaps
 and praises
 deal, in their
 way, with a
 family's coming
 to terms with
 illness, disinte-
 gration and
 death.

foe, in the evening he divides the spoils."

These are not vapid, Hallmark card messages. They are rich blessings and severe criticisms. There is no pretense that all are equally beloved or good; the blessing/"will" lies largely in predictions of what will happen in the future.

So what, if anything, does all of this have to do with my mother's pearl pin, the silver bowl, our tête-a-têtes about who gets what? Well, so much of Genesis is about tracing the growth of a people through the generations. Blessings and curses, slaps and praises deal, in their way, with a family's coming to terms with illness, disintegration and death. Isaac is blind and ailing; Jacob "finished his instructions to his sons, drew his feet into the bed, and breathing his last, was gathered to his people." There is no denial of the deathbed.

Some children have been rewarded, some blasted. Jacob does not go gently or ungently into that good night; he goes in charge, clearheaded, in control. These are grand deaths, and I hope I have a similar one. Jacob knows exactly what he wants to do, what memories he wants to leave, what choices he wants to make. There is a triumph of spirit and will, the same kind of spirit that adult children and older parents strive toward, the same spirit that so energizes my

mother and me.

One last point before I return to my mother. In Genesis, in a notable reversal of real life, men tend to outlive their wives. Abraham buries Sarah, Isaac dies at 180 without any mention of Rebecca, and Jacob outlives both Rachel and Leah. (Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin, but the other female deaths are not explained).

In real life, of course, mothers, in all likelihood, outlive fathers. Now that women have the right to own property, the great inheritance scenes will increasingly be played by our matriarchs. What does this mean in terms of giving and getting, in terms of exerting power in old age? These questions are terribly important. Mothers no longer need to eavesdrop like Rebecca; daughters need not disappear like Dinah. The experience for both my mother and myself of creating our own inheritance scenes has been loving, spiritual and in every way empowering.

Mary Cahn Schwartz is a social worker in private practice in the Washington, DC area. She has been an associate professor of social work at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and has written extensively on the relationship of women's issues to psychotherapy. She is a contributing editor of the Family Therapy Networker.

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CONTINENT OSTOMY CENTER
 AT PALMS OF PASADENA HOSPITAL

Continued from page 5

And there was hardly a more symbolic place to go public than the Wall.

"We didn't expect that the (regular worshippers) would welcome us," says Haberman, a Canadian-Israeli who holds a doctorate in philosophy. "But we didn't expect the level of violence and brutality we have encountered."

In addition to being attacked by ultra-Orthodox men and women, the group has been "left unprotected by the police and labeled provocateurs by the mayor of Jerusalem," says Haberman. "They have been written off as agents of the Reform movement by the Hebrew press."

"This whole thing has to do with claims to tradition and power, and the jurisdiction of civil vs. religious authority. They (the ultra-Orthodox) have an intense

fear of anything unfamiliar," says member Shulamit Magnes, a teacher of modern Jewish history at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia, who is in Jerusalem on a one-year fellowship. "What we're doing is perceived as a threat to Judaism."

While change may be unfamiliar and threatening to the ultra-Orthodox, the visionaries in the women's group dream of the day any woman living in or visiting Israel will be able to pray at the Wall, and of their daughters growing up in a Jewish state that respects their right to pray in public.

While there are those in the group who believe this can only be accomplished by vigorously challenging authority, others prefer avoiding confrontation. But members do agree that the struggle is worth pursuing, whatever

the court's decision will be.

In the meantime, the cause continues to draw support in America, both from women's prayer groups there and from major organizations such as Hadassah and American Jewish Congress.

"This could become a mini 'Who is a Jew' issue," Magnes says. "Women getting beaten up at the Wall doesn't play well in America."

— *Randi Jo Land/Jerusalem and
Toby Axelrod/New York*

'DON'T ANGER THE MEN'

Jewish women in the United States, Canada and Europe have been joining forces in an effort to show solidarity with the "Women at the Wall."

In April, simultaneous women's prayer service were held

in Jerusalem and several U.S. and Canadian cities. Now, Rivka Haut, an organizer of the first women's service at the Wall, fellow New Yorkers Susan Aranoff and Phyllis Chesler, Montreal activist Norma Joseph and Rabbis Helene Ferris (Reform) and Nina Beth Cardin (Conservative) are organizing the International Committee for Women of the Wall that will dedicate itself to the right of women to pray at the Wall with a Torah.

According to Haut, the April prayer service had been planned in New York long before it became clear that the women in Israel would need support.

"Events built up and it turned into a North American event," said Haut. "It means that the symbol of the *Kotel* (Wall) created a momentum for women's *davening* (praying) around the country."

"WOMEN AGAINST RACISM:" A PERSONAL ACCOUNT

"Parallels and Intersections: A Conference on Racism and Other Forms of Oppression" held in Iowa City in April was the first conference I've attended of progressives and radicals — including feminist conferences — where Jewish issues felt truly present, raised not only by Jews and talked about not only in specifically Jewish workshops, but also mentioned and talked about by non-Jews. Anti-Semitism was included in the analysis of oppression presented in a series of core workshops. Kosher food was an option on the registration form, along with meat and vegetarian. Friday at sundown, a substantial group — mostly but not entirely Jewish — gathered to celebrate Shabbat.

Jews were well-represented in the daily plenary sessions, which were organized by theme. In the opening session, on myths and misinformation, Bernice Mennis, who teaches at Vermont College, spoke eloquently about the difference between myths-as-misinformation and myths-as-models, between illusions and visions, partly focusing on specific myths about Jews and about lesbians. In the final plenary session, on "Re-Thinking Alliance-Building," I described how deepening my Jewish identity had led me to connect with Israeli feminists and peace activists and, finally, with Palestinian feminists and activists.

There were not many specifically Jewish workshops, and credit for two which took place goes to New Jewish Agenda, particularly Tom Rawson, Ellen Stone and Laurie White. Laurie and Ellen — who also organized the Shabbat event — led a workshop called, "From the

Margins to the Center: Jewish, Feminist, Progressive," which examined issues of identity, comfort, and inclusion. I led a workshop, "A Progressive Jewish Approach to Israel and the Middle East Conflict." My goal was to share information without polarizing and — miracle — it was accomplished.

One real pleasure of this conference: because Jewish issues were included in the conference fabric, and a Jewish caucus met each day, I did not feel the pressure or impetus I often feel to pursue Jewish themes exclusively.

The Women Against Racism Committee, organizers of this conference, have run smaller conferences for several years. This conference, which took more than two years to plan, was envisioned as broader-reaching, including all forms of oppression and extending to men as well as women. Women Against Racism is a remarkable group: multiracial, multi-cultural, including both American and foreign students, faculty, staff and community people, lesbians and heterosexuals. The Committee's work is shaped by the "Unlearning Racism" model of Ricky Shereover-Marcuse, a Jewish woman who had died just a few months before this conference. Marcuse's model was to encourage small and large groups of people to work together to uncover and abandon their past learning of racism.

— *Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz,
co-editor of The Tribe of Dina (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989)*

Haut, Aranoff and Susan Alter met in New York with Rabbi Avraham Shapira, the Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Israel, in April for over an hour to discuss the issues surrounding women's prayer groups, particularly at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. He himself suggested that he speak with the women in Jerusalem, according to Haut. "Our meeting was on the whole positive and pleasant. He heard what we said, and he expressed his views. We didn't exactly concur. He felt that the women were creating a problem and angering the ultra-Orthodox."

The three women, along with Chesler and Rabbi Gilbert Klapperman, rabbi of an Orthodox synagogue on Long Island, New York, also met in New York with Zevulun Hammer, Israeli minister for religious affairs, to discuss these issues. He promised to meet with the Women of the Wall. (He has since met with them.) According to Haut, Hammer seemed ill-informed concerning the issues surrounding the women's prayer services at the Wall. She stressed that it's important to be meeting openly with representatives of the Israeli religious community. "It shows that there is an ongoing dialogue."

A retreat has been planned for mid-July.

"We are going to set an agenda to deal with this and other issues that need urgent attention in terms of the unity and health of the Jewish people," Haut said.

"People say, 'You don't live (in Israel), it's not something that affects your life,'" said Aranoff. "But this is not a legitimate complaint. The Wall is the center for Jews wherever they live — the atmosphere there is important for Jews all over the world."

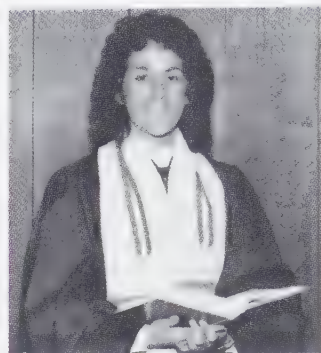
The group is collecting money to pay for the legal expenses of the women in Jerusalem. For

information about the committee or to donate money, call (718)252-0661. — TA

WOMEN RABBIS MEET

Wellness and illness. Joy and grief. Pregnancy and infertility. Marriage and widowhood. These are some of the topics explored during the three-day, fifth biennial of the Women's Rabbinic Network (WRN) of the Reform Movement, held in March in Brookline, Massachusetts.

The conference's theme was "Healing Ourselves/Healing Others." Each of the three rabbis who opened the conference had suffered either the loss of a spouse or a serious illness. One of the speakers, Rabbi Elyse Goldstein of Temple Beth David in Canton,



Rabbi Elyse Goldstein

Massachusetts explained, "We each had to answer the question, 'How did this crisis in our lives affect us spiritually as Jews, and what did it teach us as rabbis who have to help people in our congregation with similar problems?' As rabbis, we need to work on our own life issues in order to develop

special skills to help others to heal."

Some of the workshops included "Creative Liturgy in the Face of Pregnancy Loss, Miscarriage, Stillborn Birth and Abortion" with Rabbi Shira Stern of New Jersey; The Mitzvah Model: A Jewish Approach to Religious Life for the Old and/or Frail" with Rabbi Dayle Friedman of Philadelphia; "Food for the Spirit or Meals that Heal (Macrobiotic Nutrition)" with Rabbi Donna Berman of New York; "Spousal Abuse" with Rabbi Julie Spitzer of Baltimore; and "Integrating Gay Men and Lesbians into Our Congregations and Organizations" with Rabbi Stacy Offner of St. Paul.

The Women's Rabbinic Network was organized in 1975 by

MAZEL TOV

ALICIA APPLEMAN-JURMAN won a 1989 Christopher Award for her book *Alicia: My Story* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988).

BEVERLY DAVIS, of Palm Beach, Florida, was elected president of the Leadership Conference of National Jewish Women's Organizations, whose member groups comprise 2.5 million women.

RUTH FELDSTEIN, a Brown University graduate student, was awarded the Joint Distribution Committee's Boris Smolar Student Journalism Award for the booklet accompanying the photo exhibit "Against the Current" about second generation refuseniks. The project was sponsored by B'nai B'rith Women.

SYLVIA HASSENFELD was installed as the first woman president of the American Joint Distribution Committee in December.

BETTY JEAN LIFTON received the *Present Tense* Joel H. Cavior Award for the biography *The King of Children* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1988).

GOLDIE KWELLER is the first woman to assume the presidency of Mercaz, the Zionist organization for Conservative Judaism.

RELA GEFFEN MONSON was appointed dean of Gratz College.

TOVA REICH received the 1989 Edward Lewis Wallant Award for her novel *Master of the Return* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988).

BARBARA ROGASKY received the *Present Tense*/Joel H. Cavior Literary Award for children's literature for *Smoke and Ashes* (New York: Holiday House, 1988).

WENDY WASSERSTEIN received a Pulitzer Prize for drama and a Dramatists Guild Award for her play "The Heidi Chronicles," now playing at the Plymouth Theater in New York City.

Rabbi Sally Priesand (the first woman ordained in the United States), Rabbi Sandy Sasso and Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus, among others. Its primary goal is to provide a support network to share the concerns and experiences that are unique to women in the rabbinate. The next WRN biennial conference will be held in Chicago in 1991.

— Gladys Damon

POST-PARTUM S.O.S.

Who will take care of today's *kimpatorin* — postpartum mother? Amany, who "cleans a whole apartment in four hours, reads to the children in three languages and loves them like her own?" Gittel, who "runs to the gas range and cooks up suppers to last a week?" Tanya, who "folds clothes like nobody else this side of Kiev?" Or Ida, who "cures post-partum depression better than a drug store?"

These four Russian immigrants work for Kimpatorin Aid, a volunteer women's organization founded seven years ago whose goal is to help postpartum mothers and their families during the days (or weeks) of stressful transition after the birth of a baby.

Administered by volunteers who receive phone requests and confer nightly (except on the Sabbath), Kimpatorin Aid matches its immigrant homemakers' skills to the *kimpatorins'* needs of the following day. Calls come from all over the metropolitan area, although most are from Orthodox women in Flatbush, Boro Park, Williamsburg and Queens.

Kimpatorin Aid offers help — equally and without question — to those who can and cannot pay. For further information, contact: Kimpatorin Aid, 202 Keap Street, Brooklyn, NY 11211-7916, (718)384-4929

— Naomi Danis

OBITUARIES

JUDITH EPSTEIN, teacher to generations of women of Hadassah, where she was a leader for over 70 years, and president from 1937-39 and 1943-47, died in New York on October 27, at age 92.

BLANCHE FINE, for more than 40 years a leader of Na'amat USA, and its president from 1963-65, died on March 5.

MARILYN HIRSH, author-illustrator of more than 30 books for children, and first recipient of the Sydney Taylor Award for Jewish Children's Literature of the Association of Jewish Libraries, died in New York on October 17, at age 44.

DR. GISELA PERL, who was forced to work under Dr. Josef Mengele and risked her life performing abortions in an attempt to save pregnant women in Auschwitz, died in Jerusalem in November at age 88. Perl, who survived to deliver 3,000 healthy Jewish babies, made aliyah from New York ten years ago.

BETTY K. SHAPIRO, a leader in the Jewish and women's communities died in Washington on March 18. Shapiro was international president of B'nai B'rith Women from 1968-71, creator of its public affairs program and convener of the Women's Plea for Soviet Jewry.

FRANCES STELOFF, the distinguished independent bookseller who championed experimental writing and challenged censorship, and whose Gotham Book Mart, founded in 1920, remains a literary landmark, died in New York on April 15 at age 101.

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Yael's Story

by Elizabeth Socolow

Poet's note: The books of the Bible are spare, leaving us a wide margin for speculation. The Book of Judges, for example, does not explain why Yael is alone in a tent, with nobody nearby, ready to receive the enemy leader Sisera. Is it possible that the women, with Deborah in charge, tried to position her strategically? (Deborah had, after all, prophesied that a woman would have the glory of this battle.) Or, perhaps, Yael is in isolation in a menstruation hut . . . ? From these conjectures I freely go on to imagine a continuum of rejection: Yael as a divorced woman with no source of support except from other women, Yael being unilaterally served a *get* (divorce) as performed in 1986 in a Conservative congregation in America . . .

My question is: What pain and what fear in Yael is marshalled to accomplish such aggression?

Come, calm, and let me see the sea again,
hear its monotone erase these late, startling sights,
lull me to the time of cradling a warm infant,
laughing with the small child who thinks a camel is a boat
on the dark miragewater of the sands.

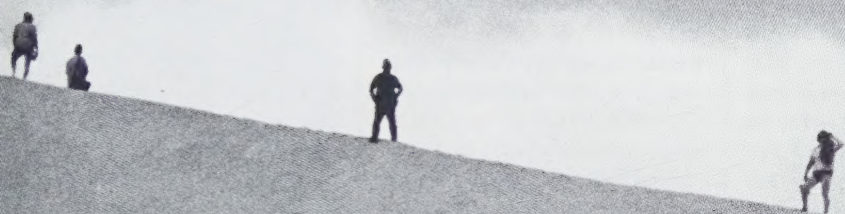
I have walked with my arms above my head seven times,
circling the room. I could feel my breasts and knew shame
before the men who watched: the plums of me begging,
to be eaten, so useless, unpicked. This is divorce: to be ripe
and unpicked, all the rabbis watching, nodding at the ceremony,
approving at how exactly, alone, you walk circling a room,
counting to yourself, your hands above your head
holding a parchment with their holy writing.
Cut and sever, come together. There is a dance to do.
Given freedom in such a time, we might scream, or bare
our breasts in the rabbis' chamber.

I wanted to dress as an old man with a beard,
hide my shape, play the clown and take their writ of divorce
between my teeth, walk a tightrope into the sky and let the precious
message drop to Sheol. Instead I killed a man, and they call me hero.
They sent me to a tent like a menstruating woman.
I was there put aside with milk and crusts of bread from the weekly
baking. The women are trying to keep me alive, my family gone.
No one talks, they say, of why I am here alone in this flat stretch
in the middle of the badlands.

How long have I been ready to see blood,
ready to kill any man who reminds me of *his* turning away from me?
I did not know I wanted that.
I thought of tentpoles, yes, I thought of the empty space of tents,
the spine of the world itself filling me.
I thought of animals, their enormity in rut, but not of murder.

I was only trying to summon the old quiet of walking
with a man you love in an arborway, he loves you
and there is the joy after love, the feel
of safety and the ease that comes after a summer storm,
rain washing away the spikiness in the air, the restlessness
in the chest and thighs gone for that little while.

I want the stillness of the desert,
the leathery sage, its leaves pungent and static in the heat,
the waiting snake coiled like the motionless rock it leans against.
I long for the pliant hardness of bodies. Death is so still,
the air heavy with a sweet flower no one has ever seen.



I took the tent pin, and put it through his head, yes,
I did that, stilled him, surprising myself, knowing
even as I did it, curious, as if I were making
a new kind of dough, it meant glory: the men
would approve of this; *he* might take me back, might like me again.
I thought of my son. I thought of this man's mother.
And still I did it. I would have done anything
not to have been there to receive a fleeing coward.
I did not want to be a waystation on the desert.
I did not want to be alone. The carpet with its flowers was my friend.
For days it distracted me.
He rolled himself inside the friend of my weeping and praying.
I had only the carpet, the bedroll and the commode, and he
took the carpet and wrapped it around himself. Come, calm,
I would say to myself, come, calm, and God, please send me

sleep. Instead, he came, Sisera, like a breeze,
an answer to a prayer opening the tentflap.
He was no more than that, hardly solid,
the wind begging for safe-keeping in the tent,
stirring the air. I could feel how much he wanted comfort.
I gave him the warm milk I use to seduce sleep from the tense
shadows that keep me awake. He drank and slept under the carpet.
I took the tentpin and put it through his skull, easy,
a sound
like a mouse caught under a boot in the dark.



Elizabeth Socolow grew up in New York City and received both a Reform and an Orthodox Jewish education. She now lives in Princeton, NJ and Poughkeepsie, NY, is the mother of two grown sons and the author of a book of poems entitled Laughing at Gravity: Conversations With Isaac Newton (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).

Photo by Gail Rubin

TSENA RENA

"Go and See" or "Seek Enlightenment" is the title of the Yiddish-language Torah for women, with the portion of the week and folk tales. Tsena-Rena was the first resource that enabled women to educate themselves.

FURTHER READING

THE JEWISH FAMILY and its problems is the focus of a new study guide in "Bat Kol," Fall '88, and "Textures," \$3. *Hadassah Order Department/50 West 58th Street/New York, NY 10019.*

"JAP JOKES: HATEFUL HUMOR," is a booklet by Mimi Alperin, describing recent analyses of the anti-Semitic stereotypes associated with "Jewish American Princess" humor, \$1. *American Jewish Committee/165 East 56th Street/New York, NY 10022.*

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS WHO WERE CHILDREN during the Nazi era give their testimony in *One-to-One*, a teaching module for Jewish junior and senior high schools. Also available is a bibliography of Holocaust reference material written in English, with readings suitable for children and teenagers specially noted for teachers. *Center for Holocaust Studies/1609 Avenue J/Brooklyn, NY 11230.*

You can get samples of a quarterly newsletter sharing the experi-

ences of more than a dozen **WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUPS** committed to full participation and observance of Jewish ritual. *Women's Tefillah Network/P.O. Box 300236/Brooklyn, NY 11230.*

Hazon, a new English-language magazine published in Jerusalem, seeks to bridge the gap between **SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN ISRAEL.** *The Geshar Foundation/421 Seventh Avenue/New York, NY 10001.*

An extensive list of feminist literature by and about Jewish women is available **ON TAPE AND IN BRAILLE.** *Womyn's Braille Press/P.O. Box 8475/Minneapolis, MN 55408.*

"When There Is No Alternative," by Rabbi Sanford Seltzer, is a 34-page guide for Jewish **COUPLES CONSIDERING DIVORCE.** *Union of American Hebrew Congregations/1330 Beacon Street/Brookline, MA 02146.*

LOOK AND LISTEN

"ABORTION: FOR SURVIVAL" is a new videotape designed to reshape the U.S. abortion debate by dramatically showing the critical need for abortion in both a personal and global context. \$20 per copy plus \$2.50 shipping; \$1 for a viewing guide. *Fund for the Feminist Majority/1600 Wilson Blvd. Suite 704/Arlington, VA 22209.*



COMEDIENNE MARION WEINSTEIN performs at Top of the Gate in a 41-minute audio or video tape. *Earth Magic Productions/2170 Broadway Suite 16/New York, NY 10024.*

"Lecha Dodi" (Come, My Beloved) **TRADITIONAL SABBATH SONGS** with Achi Ben-Shalom and Dolly Moda'i, and "Yadayim L'Mala" (Hands Up!), traditional Israeli children's songs with Rom Rosenblum, Debby Graudenz and Bracha Trabin, are 25-minute audio cassettes. *Remez Records/1019 Aileen Street/Oakland, CA 94608.*

"Murray Avenue" is a 28-minute color film by Sheila Chamovitz portraying a Jewish **NEIGHBORHOOD IN TRANSITION.** *New Day Films/853 Broadway Suite 1210/New York, NY 10003.*

"WORKING IT OUT: BLACKS AND JEWS ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUS" is a 30-minute video documentary about a prejudice-reduction program. *The National Coalition Building Institute/172 Brattle Street/Arlington, MA 02174.*

"PLANTING SEEDS FOR PEACE" is a 23-minute video focusing on the relationships among four Israeli Arab, Jewish and Palestinian teenagers. *Eschaton Foundation/Educational Film and Video Project/5332 College Avenue #101/Oakland CA 94618.*

"Faith Amid the Flames" is a 40-minute video documenting the **SPIRITUAL HEROISM AND RESISTANCE** of Orthodox Jews during the Holocaust. *Eventful Enterprise/21 West 38th Street/New York, NY 10018.*

"Bli Sodot — Without Secrets," "Parpar Nechmad — Lovely But-



terfly," and "Keshet Ve Anan — Cloud and Rainbow," are three series of educational video cassettes produced by Israel Educational Television in **HEBREW FOR CHILDREN** with little knowledge of the language. *SISU Home Entertainment/20 West 38th Street Suite 402/New York, NY 10018.*

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

The Hermine Weinberg Residential Drug Rehabilitation Center for Women is a treatment center designed specifically for **DRUG DEPENDENT JEWISH WOMEN**, with special accommodations and provisions for mothers and their children. *Chabad National Drug Abuse Treatment Programs/1952 S. Robertson Blvd./Los Angeles, CA 90034.*

ISRAEL NEEDS VOLUNTEERS to serve for two to three weeks or more on army bases, in hospitals, kibbutzim or other places of community service. Volunteers pay discounted airfare; lodging and meals are provided. *Volunteers for Israel/40 Worth Street Room 710/New York, NY 10013.*

The Corps of Service to the Jewish People needs post-college and retired Jews to **VOLUNTEER IN JEWISH COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD.** Travel

and living expenses will be reimbursed. *Corps of Service to the Jewish People/Union of American Hebrew Congregations/838 Fifth Avenue/New York, NY 10021.*



The International Coalition for the Rescue of the Jews of Yemen is a new group formed to encourage the United States Government to exert diplomatic pressure to change the deplorable conditions endured by **JEWS IN YEMEN**, including the kidnapping and forced conversion of Jewish women to Islam. *ICROJOY/c/o Hayim Tawil/150 Nassau Street Suite 1238/New York, NY 10038.*

The Women's Organization for Political Prisoners is made up of Palestinian and Israeli women in **OPPOSITION TO ISRAELI OCCUPATION** of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They support Palestinian and Israeli women political prisoners. *Legal Aid for Women Detainees/c/o WOFPP/P.O. Box 31811/61318 Tel Aviv/ISRAEL.*

The Jewish Children's Bureau of Chicago is seeking foster parents, professionals or youngsters involved with the agency's **RESETTLEMENT OF EUROPEAN CHILDREN** during the period from 1933 to 1953. *Dr. Ruth Stock Zober or Charlotte Dolins-Lozano/(312)444-2090.*

WITNESSES ARE SOUGHT with direct knowledge of the mass executions which took place in the vicinity of Riga, Daugavpils (Dvinsk) and Liepaja between July 1941 and July 1942. Of particular focus are the actions of the Arajs Kommando, a Latvian auxiliary police unit under the command of the Germans. *Royal Canadian Mounted Police/War Crimes Unit/1200 Alta Vista Drive/Ottawa, Ontario/CANADA.*

JEWS IN RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH are needed to send to Jews in the USSR who have expressed a desire to connect with their heritage. *Project Sefer/Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry/210 West 91st Street/New York, NY 10024.*

THE ANNE FRANK CENTER creates educational outreach efforts such as the traveling exhibit, "Anne Frank in the World: 1929-1945." Membership (\$25) includes a subscription to the center's newsletter "Legacy." *The American Friends of the Anne Frank Center Inc./106 East 19th Street/New York, NY 10003.*



A new program aimed at exploring **WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY** in Judaism, has been established by K'fari, the Center for Rural Judaism. An information center will

collect stories of spiritual and religious experiences, and some of these will be published in a quarterly newsletter. *Neshama/P.O. Box 545/Brookline, MA 02146 or The K'fari Center/RFD 1, Box 256/Cabot, VT 05647.*

To heighten worldwide awareness of the plight of famine-stricken Ethiopian Jewry, you can wear a silver and leather bracelet engraved with the words "Beta Yisrael" and **"REUNIFY ETHIOPIAN JEWRY."** This project is a joint effort of the World Union of Jewish Students, the American Association for Ethiopian Jews and B'nai Brith Hillel Foundations. All proceeds go towards the campaign. Bracelets are \$18 each; \$10 for students; in lots of 10, \$8 each; add \$2 postage per order. *B'nai Brith Hillel Foundations/1640 Rhode Island Avenue NW/Washington, DC 20036.*

THE ORGANIZATION FOR THE ADULT CHILDREN OF JEWISH-GENTILE INTERMARRIAGES distributes a newsletter and audiotapes on a variety of relevant subjects. *Pareveh/3628 Windom Place NW/Washington DC 20008.*

A new group is reaching out to **BATTERED JEWISH WOMEN** and attempting to educate the Jewish community about domestic violence through an outreach brochure, rabbis' training and a speakers bureau. *The Jewish Working Group on Domestic Violence/c/o Jewish Family and Children's Services/1610 Spruce Street/Philadelphia, PA 19107.*

CALLS FOR MATERIALS

Entries for a book that will **SHOWCASE THE RICH CEREMONIAL LIFE** Jewish women are creating to mark special occasions. *Woman's Institute for Con-*

tinuing Jewish Education/4079 54th Street/San Diego, CA 92105.

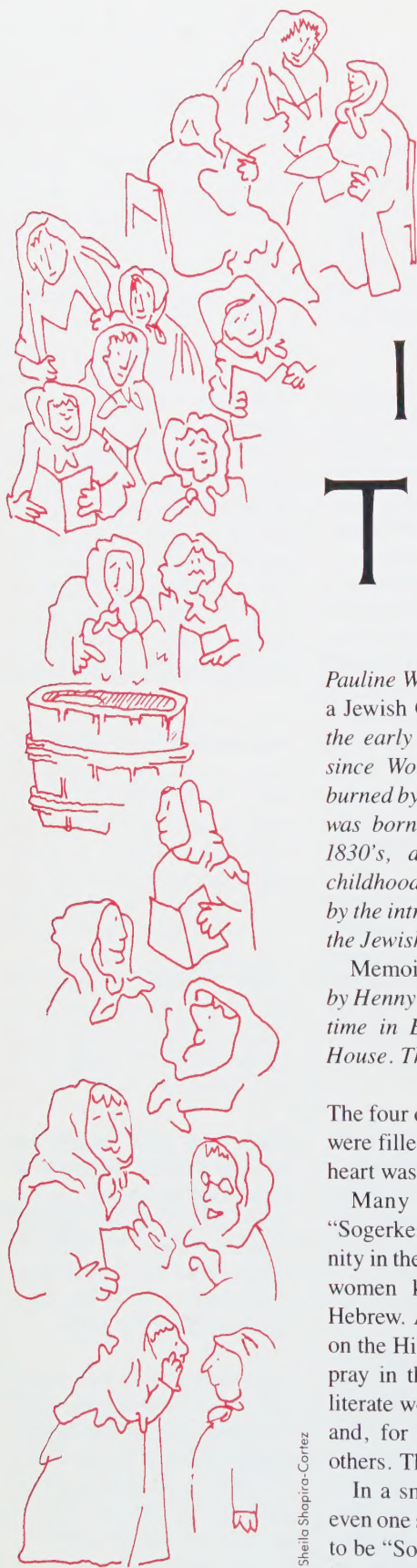
Papers on the values, issues, attitudes and dynamics that may appear in therapy with Jewish women, as clients or therapists, for a **SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL "WOMEN & THERAPY."** Submissions on the experiences of recent Russian immigrants, women who converted to Judaism, Sephardi or lesbian women are especially encouraged. Submit two copies of a one-page, double-spaced abstract before September 15, with SASE. *Rachel Josefowitz Siegel/108 West Buffalo Street/Ithaca, NY 14850.*

Materials for a special exhibition, **"BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY,"** about childbearing in Jewish tradition. Photographs portraying lying-in customs of the past, unusual birth certificates, birth congratulatory letters, texts and photodocumentation of new birthing ceremonies, such as girl-welcoming, weaning ceremonies, tree-planting in honor of a birth. *Dr. Michele Klein/Beth Hatefutsoth-Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Ramat Aviv/P.O.B. 39359/61392 Tel Aviv/ISRAEL.*

"YOU CAN HELP SHAPE THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM" is a brochure describing the ongoing worldwide search for authentic artifacts. *USHolocaust Memorial Council/2000 L Street NW Suite 588/Washington, DC 20036.*

Poetry entries for the third annual Anna Davidson Rosenberg Award for **POEMS ON THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE** will be accepted until August 31. Send SASE for entry form and guidelines. *Poetry Award Coordinator/Judah L. Magnes Museum/Berkeley, CA 94705.*

— compiled by Naomi Danis



YOM KIPPUR IN LITHUANIA: THE "SOGERKES"

Pauline Wengeroff's autobiography, Memoirs of a Jewish Grandmother, published in German in the early 1900's, has been largely unavailable since World War II, when most copies were burned by the Nazis. In the book, Wengeroff, who was born in Bobrujsk, Lithuania in the early 1830's, describes the traditional life of her childhood and the great changes brought about by the introduction of Western European ideas in the Jewish community in the 1860's and 1870's.

Memoirs of a Jewish Grandmother, translated by Henny Wenkart, will be published for the first time in English in 1990 by KTAV Publishing House. The following is an excerpt.

The four days between Yom Kippur and Succoth were filled with joking and laughter. Everyone's heart was light, relieved of sin and worry.

Many of these jokes were about the "Sogerkes" of Yom Kippur. It was a rare community in the forties of the last century where all the women knew how to read their prayers in Hebrew. And yet on the Sabbath, and especially on the High Holy Days, they felt a great need to pray in the Holy Tongue. So there were some literate women who industrialized their learning and, for a small fee prayed aloud to lead the others. They were the Sogerkes.

In a smaller Jewish town there might not be even one such woman, and in that case a man had to be "Soger" for the women. He crawled into a barrel, to observe the necessary separation of the sexes at prayer, and was plunked right into the middle of the women's section to lead them.

From the midst of this fortress then, surrounded by women, he read out all the holiest prayers. As may be imagined, an inexhaustible supply of funny anecdotes sprang from that barrel during the days following the Great Fast.

It was the job of the Soger or Sogerke to recite the prayers in a soulful, weeping tone so as to move the women's gallery to tears of remorse.

Now in our community there was a woman, the wife of the butcher, who was hard of hearing. She approached the Sogerke during the *Osh-amnu* (We Have Transgressed) and begged her to pray a little louder. Next time she came into the butcher shop, she would reward her with an especially large and tasty liver. Unwilling to break off the great penitential prayer to reply, the Sogerke wove her answer into her weeping: "The same with the liver. The same without the liver."

And a moment later the men were startled to hear the entire women's gallery sobbing above them: "The same with the liver, the same without the liver!"

A woman on her way home soon after this mess another just arriving at the synagogue.

"Nu, where are they? What are they praying?"

"Oh, we just did the prayer about the liver."

"What liver? Last year we didn't say anything like that!"

"Today, maybe, because it's leap year . . ."

© Henny Wenkart, 1989.

Henny Wenkart is a philosopher and writer who lives in New York City.